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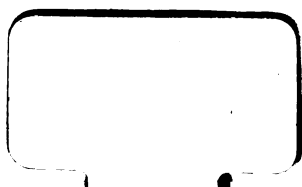
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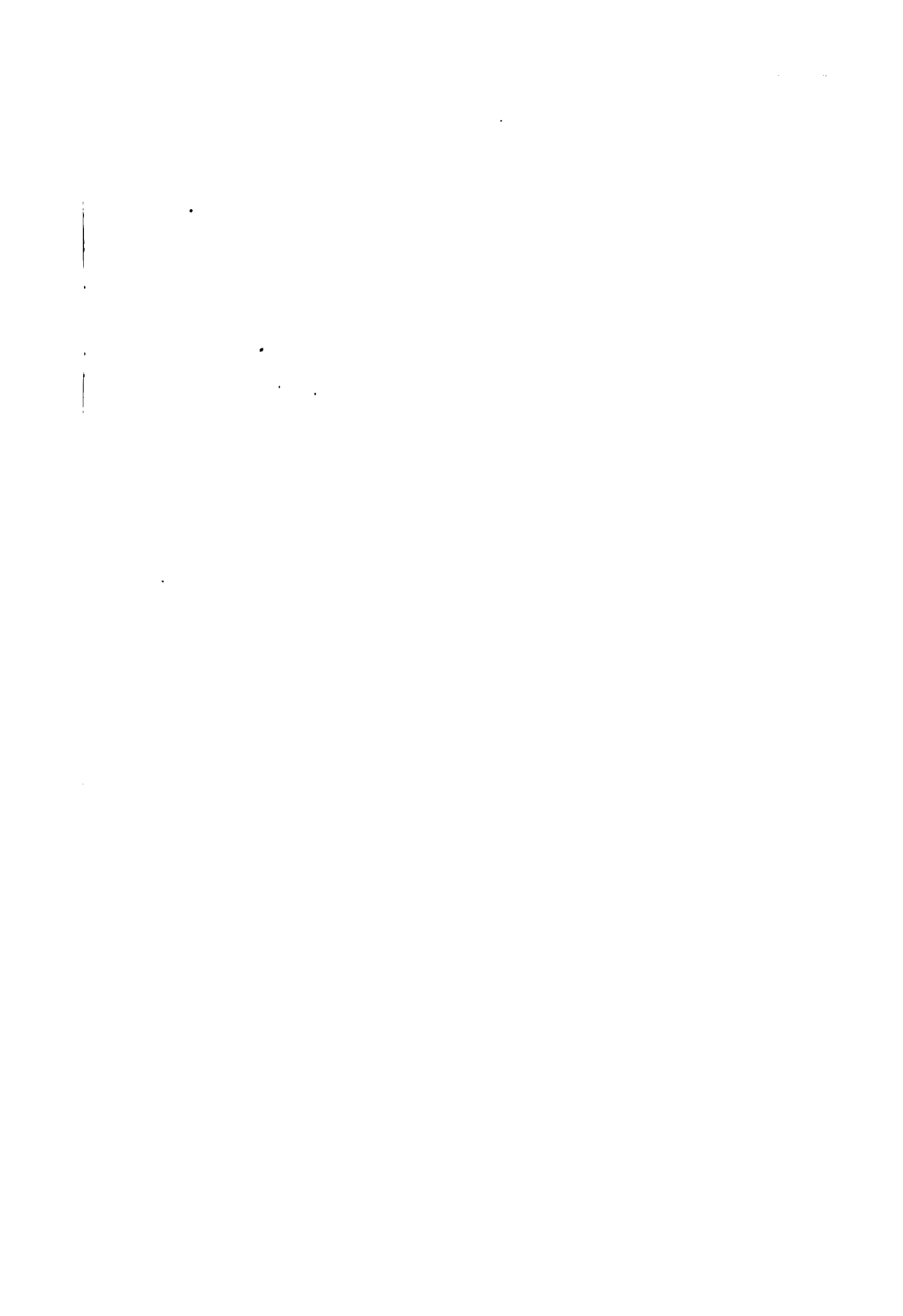
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JAMES FRAZER.

A REMINISCENCE
OF
THE HIGHLANDS OF SCOTLAND IN 1848.



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1878.

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JAMES FRAZER.

CHAPTER I.

DURING the last thirty years such great changes have taken place in the north of Scotland, that the reader may with satisfaction glance back at the then condition of the Highlands and compare it with the present—showing as it does that no part of Scotland has made such rapid strides in advancement in social and commercial progress.

A change from a busy town life to the slowness of the country is admitted by most

men now-a-days to be almost absolutely necessary for health. Although men may grumble at the want of this or that luxury, they, nevertheless, are benefited by an absence from it, and go back to town all the better of a little discomfort from a stay in the country. We believe that the variety has a most vivifying effect, and that therefore such change is a duty.

Nowhere is the charm of solitude more fully felt than in some of the retired glens in the north of Scotland. To him who loves it, and seeks it, we would say go to the far north; and he who has experienced it will say that there is great enjoyment in the stillness and rest of a Highland Glen. It is said that only the busy man, who is a stranger to such scenes, really appreciates or even apprehends the great charm of the repose in hills and glens,—that it is a special

privilege awarded to him as requital for over work in body and mind in different scenes,—that to him is permitted the full companionship of the old grey lichen-covered rock, the weeping birch, brown breckan, mossy banks, mists on the mountains, juniper knolls, and trickling burns ! To these natural beauties, at all events, great men have in all time bowed with reverence and admiration ; seeing in them the great hand that knows how to give to man with profusion and love. With the help of railways and steamboats these solitudes are now-a-days made accessible to thousands of men and women who otherwise would certainly never have approached them ; and while Saint Paul's Cathedral is now visited by the wondering Donald Macdonald, from Scorryreckan, the privilege (with Mr. Cook's faithful aid) is given to

Betsy Jane, of Aldersgate, to scale the "altitude" of Ben Nevis, the "ighest mountain as is!"

A remarkable feature in connection with the travelling world in the Highlands of Scotland is that, while the moorlands are only great tracts of barren waste, and not a vestige of cultivation visible, the public roads through them are such as might fairly compete in their delineation and structure with many of the great roads lately made by the Emperor Napoleon the Third, in France, and which latter are for ever a lasting token of the ability and zeal for his country of that great man. Until a few years ago the Government of our land granted a sum of money annually for the care and maintenance of Highland roads, as opening up the country to civilization; and we regret to have to record that in a very

parsimonious hour some Liberal member of the House of Commons determined to withdraw this sum, and to throw the whole weight of roads' expense on the heritors ; not by any means a wealthy community in the north of Scotland. For one hundred and twenty miles from Perth to Inverness, and for about an equal distance north from Inverness to Wick, these roads were all subsidized by Government, and those who remember the old coaching days there, will think of their order, speed, and punctuality with pleasure.

Several miles away among the wilds from this main road, called the Highland Road, out of deference we presume to the roads anywhere else, was situated a Shooting Box of very rustic and very unassuming pretensions, and occupied for the season by three Scotch gentlemen, bachelors, ardent

sportsmen and moderately rich. They were old acquaintances; and had travelled much.

Thirty years ago it was not common as it is now, that a tenant of Shootings was comforted in his Highland sojourn with the fine villa for Shooting Box, having all modern improvements in architecture and furnishing; where croquet lawn and ribbon borders, terraced walks, are usual, and make up a wonderful contrast to the surrounding wilderness. Then, the farm house or cottage of humble style was considered ample accommodation for the sportsman in the hills; and often the schoolmaster's or the tailor's cottage was at a premium, when the Inn was distant from the field of sport.

On the shooting of Scraggan, occupied by our friends, the Lodge provided was a farm-

house of the plainest style of architecture, that is, it had a window on each side of the door, three windows in the storey above, and three very prominent attic windows lately let into the thatched roof, and made more modern-looking by being slated, while the back view of the house presented rather an irregular display of doors and windows, these being placed where available for use, without any pretence at design. The kitchen was a large adjunct to the house, and was quite detached. It differed in the roof from the Lodge by being covered with exaggerated looking turf slabs, if we may call them so. Inside the kitchen was generally a smoky scene, but excellent hams of pork, venison, and mutton, with many salmon kippers were prepared on its rafters. Here Mrs. Jenny, the housekeeper, prevailed in person daily over one or two inferiors,

who revered her commands in all things pertaining to that region of importance. Becoming-looking was she in her position of housekeeper, and nothing was in her ever amiss, from her large salmon-coloured topknot to her active feet, amply provided as these latter were with nailed shoes that pattered like a pony's over the stone-paved court. Then the bothie for the gillies, a hut of primitive make, assuming nothing modern about it,—exhibiting the common absence of window (in the Highlands) further than a hole which appeared to have been forgotten to be filled in with the turf of which the house was constructed; a door which was even out of keeping with the house, being if possible more irregular, whose base was rugged and nagged, pieces having apparently been torn off by dogs when endeavouring to get in or out. The dark curtain of

smoke which usually hung about that open doorway would have appalled many of our modern reformers in cottage architecture ; and Mr. Tom Taylor would have been staggered had he beheld or even known of its sanitary arrangements. And yet, strange to say, from such dark and untenable-looking holdings, many a smart lad has fought his way well up in the world, especially if helped at a time in life when help is of avail for a start.

The head keeper's new house was really, however, the most singular looking erection about Scraggan. The most marked feature we may premise was that it was wholly slated ; and the slates were well chosen for the climate, being large blue slabs, and very durable. In itself, however, the house was a mockery on architecture ; such a thing as would invite Ruskin to stay for full five

minutes on a journey to look at as the very rudest type of man's work in stone and lime. To Ruskin the keeper's house, as seen at Scraggan, would be in the merit of architecture what to Darwin the protoplasm of man attained to at the gorilla stage of life. It was a slice of the rudest mason work, and bearing evidence of then belonging to man by a narrow door and a window.

The accommodation consisted of one room surmounted by planks on the exposed rafters, and which upper part was named a "loft." The furnishings of the house were quite plain—a deal table and a few very common chairs made of the same wood, with a "box-bed," which shut up during the day, composed the whole. The chimney-place occupied almost all the gable end, and the long chain suspended halfway up, with the iron

pot attached, shewed that Donald was not above his broze.

And withal Scraggan had an important thriving, active look about it. The keeper and upper gillies were good-looking men, dressed in a manner creditable to their position. Donald "himself," the head keeper, maintained a strong predilection for home-spun clothes, always dyed in very decided colours. His whole new suit resembled in colour the red burn trout of his native streams, and (being home spun) each hair seemed made with a portion to spare in the spinning, and added a "heckley" or a fleecy-woolly appearance to the man, and he shone like a man of bronze in the sun; and his large bonnet of the same cloth, girdle-shaped and surmounted by a noble dhalia of red wool, made him pleasant and healthy looking. He was six feet high, and

had a powerful bust, and gigantic propelling powers, from his large leather-and-iron cased feet upwards. In a Chartist riot in Trafalgar Square, Donald would be very apt to be promoted by Citizen Bradlaugh if such a thing were possible. The under gillies of the ground were somewhat like the terriers, very rough and wiry, with lots of agility, and a habit of active opposition to peace of any kind involving silence and composure. The inferiors of this class were by no means solicitous about dress. When bounding out of the Bothie in the morning along with half-a-dozen terriers, the whole gillie looked for some time like a bundle of rags thrown violently out, and then he gradually ceased less and less to resemble a bundle, and more and more to become like a tartan gillie! They certainly had no bodily ailment, and were above doctor's pre-

scriptions ; a dram, however, was always acceptable !

The Glen of Scraggan was an interesting place. The burn ran merrily near the house, and through the hills and dales for many miles in the lands above. It widened out in sight of the Lodge, and became there a gravelly ford, where Highland cattle and horses were wont to come lounging down to drink and sport—the calves with shaggy coats and Celtic manners ; very showy when covered with early dew in the morning sun. The black-faced sheep were very fond of the close-nipped sweet grass near the burn, and they were pretty creatures in the scene there—the black and white so vivid on their faces and feet, and their silent yet active work in the world going on apace in the nibbling work set before them. The hills were craggy and

precipitous. Pleasant to the eye of the person who loves to look on the world as it has for ages stood uncultured. In his estimation, it may be, that no garden flowers can vie with the glory of the blooming heather or bank of flowering whins and broom ; no stately terrace and lawn match the grandeur of the hills, rich in grey crags, with hanging birch and rock-grown pine ; no formal fountain can compare with the silver streak of water that trickles down the rocks with tireless fall. Or what so grand as that broad forehead of rock that facing to the east reflects the early sun, and sends a sheen of light over the land for many miles—a *glent*, as the Scotch word is, which attracts and concentrates one's admiration ! And here and there an aspen-tree makes merry in this wilderness with its quivering and waving

leaves and branches ; a comfort and a home for ravens, merles, and mavis.

The Shooting Lodge of our friends lay at the foot of hills, having a south-eastern exposure to the sun, and thus catching its early rays in the mornings ; while from the north and east it was sheltered by the hills and woods. A pleasant place to pass an idle time in summer, and there are many such to be had in Scotland, by seeking.

Red deer occasionally came in small detachments to the valley of the Scraggan ; generally, however, only one or two at a time, and, noble animal as he is, we grieve to say that his visits there were always predatory. Such deer, leaving the higher and more distant solitudes, came to the valley for no better or more noble purpose than plunder. Deer have ascertained that turnips and oats, although supposed to be only

adapted for the use of domestic animals and man, are fit food for the "antlered monarch of the wilds;" and having well-grounded suspicions that man will assuredly pepper him if he catches him in the corn, he comes warily to his theft in the gloaming of night, and makes off like any common Jack Sheppard early in the morning! To the credit of the tribe, however, we will say that this does not frequently take place, and that deer are on the whole very respectable, and no law breaker more ready to take a hint and make himself scarce, when requested to do so. 2

A calm evening was just closing in, after a bright hot day, as one of our friends sat smoking his evening pipe on the long wooden bench which supplied the party with sitting accommodation in front of the Lodge. A quick movement of the ears,

head, and eyes of the little terrier close beside him attracted his attention; and then quietly lifting the pert little pet on to his knee, he looked earnestly in the same direction as that to which the dog was attracted; and there, on the verge of the birch wood that screened the foreground of the opposite hill, he observed indistinctly a deer passing onwards towards the denser copse; now standing still, scenting the earth; now moving noiselessly forward, with head erect; now staying its pace to listen and to look. Not awed by the smoking proximity of civilization, but intent on progress to its goal, it passed quickly on, and entered the thicket. Frazer had much to do to silence the irate terrier on his knee, whose nose he forcibly held in his hand, and whose eyes glistened, in his compelled silence, at the object of

interest before him. When the deer had gone past, Frazer rose and walked over to the house of Donald More, the head keeper. Here he related the startling news that the deer was close at hand; and then the whole party being apprised, a consultation was entered on for the events of the morrow. A small farm some miles distant, where oats were grown, Donald declared to be the object of the deer's nocturnal visit, and he knew that the depraved animal would remain eating the poor man's corn till "skreich o' day," and that then, being so far satiated, he would retire to the woods; and from there he was to be routed by Donald and his men. He would send round the "fiery cross" in the form of gillies to rouse the neighbourhood for beaters. The gentlemen would be placed at intervening distances with their rifles in

the course which the deer would most probably take, and on them depended the life or death of this very welcome thief in the night !

The gentlemen retired to the Lodge, and Donald to his night's work.

"A fine deer," said Frazer ; "I hope we may nobble him in the morning."

"I suppose that there's no mistake about its being a deer," suggested MacAndrew. "You saw him clear enough; did you not, Frazer? You know that these Highland cattle about here are very much the colour of deer, and the evening light was gone almost; it would be rather a farce if we went out and found no deer."

"We had not so much toddy after dinner I think, that I should mistake a deer for a *beast*," said Frazer.

"It has been done, though, and in daylight also. Old Smithson fired right

and left into one of Kirsty Matheson's stots one day when we were roe-hunting at Speyside, and dropped him beautifully ! He was very anxious to get a shot at a roe ; and as the animal was something like one in colour, and seen only partially in the cover, he thought, I suppose, that the time had surely come at last ; and he let him have it sharp at about ten paces distance. I think, from looking at the place where Smithson stood and where the beast was shot, it must have been looking at him when he fired ; but he would not acknowledge this ! Kirsty got £12 for the carcass, and was well pleased with her share of the day's sport."

"Cover-shooting is always more or less dangerous," said Forbes. "I have been shot three times in roe-deer-hunting, although not seriously. I do not care,

however, about going into a wood with inexperienced sportsmen; and I will never forgive that stupid Lord Jones, who fired at and killed my beautiful hound. It is so unjustifiable to fire at anything until you are quite satisfied what it is, especially in cover. How many stories there are about such folly!"

"Yes; one cannot be too careful. I suppose we may have a little scene of the kind to-morrow, if all these folk come whom Donald is going to warn and invite," said Frazer.

"Beaters are not of much use in a wood. Three good beagles, or hounds—such as my half-bred blood-hounds, which were the best in the world—are better than fifty beaters. When the 'holloa!' gets up in the wood, the deer listen to ascertain 'the position' of the beaters; and in many cases,

if they cannot outflank them conveniently, they will face round and pass through the rank of beaters. Now, with dogs they seem to be rather amused than sorely hunted! They run in wide circles, in the hope that the dogs may pass straight on; but on finding that they are still chased, they assume the art of endeavouring to tire the dogs by running on at short distances in front of them, and darting off when the dogs come within a few yards. Then the art of the huntsman, who knows the habits of his game, comes into play. By heading the dogs—that is ascertaining how they run, and by dashing across in front—he will come on the deer, judging his halting distance by the baying of the dogs.”

“I know that to stand on a roe-deer pass in November, with a cold east wind blowing in your ear, and when you have to

remain as still as a post in the hope that the deer may run near enough for you to get a shot, is not very exciting work for the sportsman," said Frazer.

"Yes; and particularly if the deer does not come near enough," said MacAndrew.

"Ah, well," said Forbes; "no doubt that there is much to enjoy in this country in the way of sport, but for actual shooting and large game, there is no place in all the world like my old ground in South Africa, with its grand long stretching grass lands and rich valleys, full of deer and wild swine. There we had no trouble in finding game. Up saddle and ride, and with a horse trained to shooting, you could always make sure of a good buck. I had a horse once that became as ardent a hunter as myself, and he would prick up his ears and stand stock still whenever he got a glimpse of a

buck lying in the long grass. Whenever I fired, which I always did from the saddle, not coming down to fire, he moved on steadily to the spot where the deer lay."

"We must all have a day there yet," said MacAndrew. "You have fairly set me on for sport in that land of yours."

"Well, if ever we do get there, you will find it very much freer than the small compressed sort of ground here, where every boundary beacon is a sort of fixed policeman, watching your every footstep lest you make any encroachment on the marches."

"Yes, there is a smallness about shootings generally in this country, compared with the enlarged notions people acquire when resident on any of our great continents for any time. I fancied when I was a boy that nothing could be so gigantic as our native

hills, but travelling in India has considerably altered my views on that, and many of my home-spun fancies," said MacAndrew.

"What about supper? The speldin and the mild whisky with hot water and sugar?" said Frazer laughingly. "I dare say you would have given all the deer and the mountains you have both seen abroad for one whiff in your nostrils of that peat smoke, and one dirl of Jenny's kettle lid."

"Well, I must say that a speldin is very pleasant in a Highland bothie, and Jenny certainly is a deacon at cooking them, and also the bannocks which she so generously adorns our table with; and the salt butter in fleecy flakes is an important element with speldin and bannocks; and also the fresh eggs, which might vie in whiteness with the top of Ben Scourag; the hot water with sugar and a smirk of that straw-coloured

aqua must be taken into consideration when we are reflecting on places far away."

"Do you think that these eatables and drinkables, which we enjoy so much here, are in reality the elements of what we know as love of country?" asked MacAndrew jokingly.

"They may give us a 'pang at parting,'" said Forbes, "but we cannot forget the braes and the burns, the rocks and the lochs, which first roused our affections and created patriotism when we played among them. Would you believe now that I lately walked thirty miles to seek a knowie covered with broom which I mind lying on in my boyhood; and I did not find it as I left it! The bonny grass which covered it among the yellow broom, was all rooted up, and an improving tenant was trying to grow potatoes on it! It was made a good use of no

doubt, but I grudged it to the man, as it was a favourite howff for some of us youngsters, and we used to listen with joy at the broom pods in summer cracking in the sun as they ripened."

"However," said Frazer, "do not keep the sugar there very much longer. I suppose we must finish this treat of Jenny's in good time, as the morning will demand all our attention. Will you take some more of this calf-feet jelly, and some of this most enticing cream? Cultivation at least can never produce cream like the Highland cream, and on the whole, I am almost prepared to say that a greater degree of cultivation than exists at Scraggan is a thing to be deplored."

"Good, again," said Forbes; "I wonder you ever left your country. I suppose your Ceylon coffee is far less comfort to you than whey and peas bannocks?"

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"By the way," remarked Frazer, "while you were enlarging on that topic, the advantage of game of the deer kind, I should have asked you why you desiderate our grouse compared with deer as sport? Who is more anxious than you to walk up a 'stey brae' when the dog is pointing earnestly at what looks like a bunch of broken stones, and turns out to be a single bird that won't rise till it is walked up? And who so smiling when there is a dead point, with a certainty of birds—your face gyrating in expression from the ultra solemn and anxious to the self-satisfied simper and vain-glorious? And who more desirous to go round the last possible hillock on the return beat? I think that you forget our bonny birdies when you are speaking of deer."

"Yes, Frazer has you there, Forbes, most decidedly! I pity the African deer or

vlak-vark if you are more anxious about him than you are about the grouse ! ”

“ I like the birds, and everything belonging to them, and I like the heather that they wisely choose to live on, and I am religious enough to thank Providence that he has given us such bounties to live amongst, so that we will not say more on the subject of the African deer or the vlak-vark in comparison ; but he who can admire every living thing that has come from the hand of the Creator, has much to be thankful for.”

“ How very different our hill sports are to the English battue ! But I fancy that there they must have such entertainments as battues, although it looks a plain sort of sport. I have often supposed that much of the entertainment, if it may be so called, must arise from observing the astonishment of the pheasants on getting No. 6 shot

instead of the usual grains they are in the way of receiving from the hand of man !”

“There comes a sough of wind up the glen ! Donald calls it the Strathdearn pipers, but why that howling or moaning noise may be called pipers I can’t say. We generally associate liveliness with piping.”

“Yes,” said Frazer, “but not with Strathdearn. It requires much piping there sometimes to make things go lively. It is a very cold corner in some winds.”

“Now let us off to roost like good birds. I suppose you know what guns you are to take, and all that ? My old Snowie two-groove I will certainly depend on again.”

So they retired to their little bedrooms, snug but not extravagant in furnishing, and slept as men sleep who fear little by day or by night—a faithful natural rest.

CHAPTER II.

THE little burn ran briskly in the early morning, making much noise among the boulders resting in its bed, indicating that a considerable spate of rain had fallen on the hills during night; but the weather was good as weather went of late at Scraggan. There was a fine silvery cloak on the grass and juniper bushes made of the clear bells of moisture; the spiders' interminable webs, traced with vapoury covering, marked

their endless array of trapping and netting; a flimsey show withal, which would vanish in the first breath of warmth. On the hills the mist floated in ample folds, a white sea that hid the sun; the wind using its influence in slowly moving it now and then, to show a higher crag or a lonely pine on the mountains. As yet, however, the sun was absent at Scraggan Lodge.

Donald, the keeper, had gathered a goodly group of beaters, and it is a well-known fact that no other event, in this country, unless, perhaps, a funeral, will draw such a gathering in even very bad weather as a hunt. The loud "holloa" of the beaters has a wild charm in it when resounding through the woods that old men do not forget the influence of, and which boys and lads delight in. Then one or two of the neighbouring tenant farmers generally join

the splore, with their sons, well armed with guns for shooting smaller game in the beat ; and good bags of hare, rabbit, woodcock, and black game are made up on these cover hunts. The main object, however, is to rouse the deer and chase him in the direction of the men who hold the passes where he must run. The schoolmaster of the district not unusually joins in the excitement, at the earnest appeals of his pupils, and with them, makes appearance, about the Lodge to lend his voice and theirs to the chorus in the woods. But by no means an every-day looking subject is our friend the schoolmaster on such occasions. He comes prepared for that one day as for a holiday ; and it is then only, and on Sundays, that his rather thin but very respectable black dress coat comes out to make a good appearance among the men. To him—earnest in

the hunt, and anxious as to his position above the vulgar—his dress coat is no inconvenience among the whins and juniper. To other men who usually adopt the dress coat as a deference to indoor dignity, and who on the hill generally put on woollen clothes from choice, this style of the schoolmaster's may seem absurd, but not so to him; nor to his friends who know him. Had he come otherwise clad, with only a regard to comfort, the schoolmaster of Scraggan would have been looked at with wonder, as neglecting what was undoubtedly a prerogative. Odd enough, too, the same rigid observance of order is seen also in his tall cylinder black hat, which holds its position, as part of the schoolmaster, among the thickets, and though somewhat brown, with rather mangy-looking spots, it becomes Mr. Macgillivray very nicely,

even on a hunt! There is a pleasant modesty about him also as he advances to the Lodge with his demure face lighted up by the occasion, and with his whin-root stick, much knarled, in his hand. His boots, too, are a wonderful contrast to the long-tailed coat, being thicker and more tackety than those of the keeper; otherwise, however, but that he shows a good deal of silver chain over a very flowery waistcoat, he is plain. All the proprietors of terriers join the beat, *ex officio*, and some very spirited canine skirmishes take place during the muster around the Lodge, and these not unusually influence the men with the same spirit, which only the momentous prospect of the hunt subdues.

"Let the beasties a-be," says one who finds his pet not equal to the *smeddum* shown in that of his neighbour. "A-weel, let

them a-be if they'll bide a-be, but that crabbit bit creature of yours is aye the ring-leader. Gie him a bit kick, man, to take the conceit out o' him,—look till him strutting and turning himsell like a Turkey cock."

Before the start, it is usual that all present submit to the ancient custom in the Highlands 'of drinking a dram, or, what is there known as "the morning."

"Did you get your morning, Finlay."

"Ay did I, thank you, Donald, and a real good morning it was too. I haina had sic a good morning since the last beat!"

"Nae doubt, nae doubt, Finlay. The last is aye the best. See if a' the lads have had their morning, as the day's getting on," meaning that the daylight had come.

Our friends of the Lodge had had an early breakfast—Jenny being always in good time—a roaring peat fire illuminating the

breakfast-room when they appeared. A *petit verre* of bitters—whisky with chamomile and juniper—seemed not too much dissipation for their tastes even at that hour, before their Highland breakfast; and the gentlemen farmers who kindly attended the beat by invitation, all joined in this festivity. After breakfast there was little ceremony in making for the outside to “fall in” under the great commandant Donald, who was grumbling much by this time of the waste of daylight.

Deputing to Hamish, his second, the detail of making a long detour to the rear and the left with the beaters so as to enter the wood at its furthest boundary he hurried his masters away to the heights where the deer was expected to make for on being roused from the cover. On such an occasion the cord that holds the degrees of rank

between master and keeper is drawn out to be very thin, and often barely tangible. The master is often recognized only in his well-acquired capability of climbing the steep and rough ascents, or long hills; and ceremony is very much cast off by master and man in this work. It is a time when excitement is provocative of temper, and when one's own inability to make the desired speed up the hill causes him to grumble as well as perspire. Donald, however, kept on his pace, moving upwards like a fir-tree which had the aid of a traction steam-engine to help it on. But that our friends puffed a good deal, there was silence on the march—each stopping occasionally to take breath and to look down the valley beneath them.

“Scraggan begins to look small,” said MacAndrew to Frazer.

“Yes, I suppose we will lose sight of it

entirely presently, our road being over that distant hill, where the scraggy firs are scattered."

"No speaking, gentlemen, if you please, till we get over the hill," growled Donald.

Here Frazer and MacAndrew exchanged looks and smiles at the solemnity of their keeper, and followed on in silent submission. After more stiff work and an occasional stop for breath, our friends were halted by Donald.

"Now, gentlemen, you'll mind this, that keeping still is your only chance; if you move, the deer is sure to notice you, and will take away south maybe, when the game will be all over; and you'll remember that if you get a shot, it will only be a blink you'll get to do it in, as the deer will pass you like the wind. And now, Mr. MacAndrew, I'll leave you here where you may

see the deer coming up that little slope. You'll keep very quiet in this broken ground, and fire when he passes you a yard or two,—aim for the fore shoulder, not too high; and now good-bye for a while, and come awa' on the others."

After another advance Frazer was deposited in "a very likely place," where he could see out for some space in front, and have the shelter of some large stones among the heather. Further up Forbes was consigned to a small hillock, where he was also to stretch at full length on the heather, hidden by mounds of peat and grey stones.

"The wind is most shootable," said Donald, taking up a hiding-place near his master, where he could see the approach by which the deer would come.

And then the appointed hour came when all the beaters were to send up their wild

“holloa” in the woods, and advance in line, driving all before them. Looking from afar in the direction of the beat, Donald saw that it had begun by the sudden rush into the air of several wild pigeons, and the whirl aloft of a black cock occasionally. Then they could hear the cry of men and the bark of dogs, and the report of a gun, when one of the beaters fired at a hare or other game. Nearer and nearer came the “holloa” of the men; the yelping of the terriers was now heard; then, at the outskirts of the wood, where the cover became thinner, the hunted deer broke away and took to the heights at full speed. A look round on all sides seemed to confirm him of his danger, and the experienced Donald, looking from the heights, knew that he had correctly judged of the instinct of the animal as guiding him in the course where

his guns were planted to receive him. And on this path the deer now rushed with determined energy. One or two of the largest dogs in the beat followed well up on him, but were no match in speed or strength when the hills came to be scaled, and they dropped behind. Faster came the deer, and now the hiding-place of MacAndrew was at hand. A small white cloud was seen to rise from the heather, and then followed the resound of the rifle; but the deer kept on his pace with increased strength. MacAndrew had missed! Then for Frazer, whose "very likely place" became more likely at every bound of the deer. And shortly came the same resounding peals of noise, but still the deer was not stopped, but rushed on like the wind, now fully alarmed by his enemies in ambush. And up he came to where his last enemy lay,

looking at him in admiration. A gleam of sunlight came suddenly out of the clouds, and shone full on the advancing deer, each hair on his rough neck seemed to glisten into golden wires, and Forbes could plainly see the wild rolling dark eye and the expanded nostril greatly agitated by the dangers of the pursuit.

“Now, now,” cried Donald angrily, bringing the attention of the entranced sportsman back to his work; and then a roar from Forbes’s two-grooved rifle rang out, and a sudden rush by the deer evinced his wound and his increased terror. Then came a tossing of his head, a zigzag movement in his progress, then a tottering, a stumbling of the feet, and finally a long lunge down the hill; and with a low deep moan, turning his face round on his destroyers, the deer plunged into the long heather and rolled over.

Then the tragedy of blood began; Donald advancing with upstripped arm, and knife long, sharp, and shining, to let the warm life run out, by making a stab in the throat, reaching down to the heart.

“A fine ane,” said he; “I’ll warrant him eighteen stone clean!”

He who remembers the first deer he saw die, will not recall the sight with pleasure. One cannot look on with unconcern at the first seen death in the deer forest. That tower of living strength and beauty so suddenly brought low. The eye, to which you are irresistibly attracted, lately so full of life and beauty, now dulling to decay, and which yet *weeps*, strange truth, with every sob of dying life, and finally its opaque fixing into death, all impress you. We need not sentimentalize over it. Nature regards it no more in her great course

of circumstances than the unseen death struggles of a fly. A life has gone, one item more accomplished in the great tide of this world's events.

And now came up the hills from the valley the multitude of beaters, all glorying in the great success; accompanied by the unsuccessful sportsmen, rather depressed at their failure.

And then the keeper had the ropes necessary to tie the fallen deer, now so lowly among the group of men and dogs who turned out to look at his fleet flanks in the early morning; and Mr. Cameron, one of the farmers present, sent for his *powney* to carry the venison home, and a dram went round among the heroes of the hunt, and "better luck still" was *encored* by every one. Then came three gillies, panting under panniers of luncheon, and a general

feast was spread on the heather for gentle and simple. The whangs of bread and meat prepared by Jenny's skilful hands were soon cleared off by the simpler folk, and her elegant grouse pies and cold roast mutton by the others. A tune on the bagpipes was also struck up, and dances and merriment prevailed.

Then it was arranged that Mr. Cameron and Mr. MacArthur should go and dine with the sportsmen at the Lodge, and the arrangements for the descent of the hill being made, the whole party mustered for a cheer. Taking the time from Donald, a loud long huzza was sent out to the wilds, which was answered by a hundred echoes from the stern home of the now fallen victim of the chase.

Evening had advanced when the sportsmen, with their friends, arrived at the Lodge.

The prudent Jenny had everything in readiness, and an abundant table awaited the appetites of the sportsmen. The dining-room looked its best with white table linen and dark old-fashioned furniture, all polished to a perfect shine. The small cut-glass thistle, which was again handed round with piquant bitters, gave a zest for dinner, which was served with all the readiness of the orderly establishment inside Scraggan Lodge.

How Scotland can be spoken of as being "a poor country" is a wonder! Here, in the wilds of Scraggan, without any premeditation or telegraphing to outposts for help, was produced a dinner which princes in any capital from Petersburg to London might be proud to be allowed to partake of. Salmon, venison, black-faced-mutton, grouse, partridge, and woodcock! with many minor

comforts ! Scotland is rich in dainties, and they are carefully stored in the wilds of her glorious mountains, and are well worth the trouble of seeking and finding.

“ Well, we had a successful hunt to-day, gentlemen, and a good deal of walking, so that dinner will not be thrown away on bad appetites,” said Forbes. “ Robbie Burns’ grace is always applicable in such a case :— ‘ There’s some hae meat that canna eat, and some wad eat wha want it; but we hae meat, and we can eat, and so the Lord be thankit.’ ”

“ Bravo ! ” said Frazer, more cordial than reverential, “ and I wish Robbie were here this minute to share this glorious repast. Scotland deserves to be made to fast many a day for the scurvy way she treated our great bard. However, I dare say he was generally above consideration of personal

circumstance, although the barley-bree was never beneath his estimation."

"By the way, do you know, speaking of barley-bree, that many of our most distinguished statesmen in the last century got their drink from this quarter of Scotland. It is said that Pitt, Fox, Thurloe, and other big wigs always had a cask passing up and down from Inverness to London. Inverness had always a ready intercourse with Bordeaux, and France generally. I fancy that it may have been formed about the time of Mary Queen of Scots, who, you know, made a journey to Inverness."

"Yes," said Forbes, "a miserable pilgrimage for the poor Queen, full of dangers to her person. How blessed are the days that our good Queen has fallen on in comparison! It is a change to be thankful for, and still you hear men talk of the good old

times ! The more I know of them—in matters domestic, political, or religious, the more I hold them in contempt.”

“I suppose all that nonsense about the love of the Stuart race of Kings has gone away from this part of the kingdom now, Mr. Cameron ?” asked MacAndrew.

“Weel, there may be a very few people connected with the old families who speak about Prince Charlie, but they dinna do muckle more than drink his health now, I’m thinking. But blood is thicker than water, and the Keppochs and several others don’t like to hear ill of the Stuarts, for many of their forefathers were killed at Culloden.”

“A fine safe drink the toddy, Mr. Forbes,” said Mr. MacArthur. “There’s naething like it when you’re in the Highlands. It drives away damp from the system entirely.”

"Yes, it is very pleasant, but I dare say somewhat insidious. One is apt to take more than is good for him sometimes."

"No doubt, no doubt, that may sometimes happen as you say, Sir, but I think I am safe in saying that there is na a 'sair head' in a hogshead o' that *aqua*. I'm thinking it's a mixture of Balmenach and Brackla."

"Balmenach and Brackla are good natural spirits," said Mr. Cameron, "but I prefer the Ben Nevis of Long John Macdonald; it's as mild as milk, and I never heard of anybody getting spoilt upon it. The water of Glen Nevis is very shuperior for making whisky."

"Weel, weel, we mauna dispute upon that point, Mr. Cameron, but there's certainly an increasing demand on Balmenach

and on Brackla. That I ken from the gaugers."

"The gaugers," ejaculated Mr. Cameron, "I wadna believe a word out o' their mouths! However, we'll let them a-be; they're the servants of the Government."

"Yes, it's best to keep in with the powers that be," said MacAndrew; "there is no duty without deference to Government."

"Oh! ay, Sir, that's true, but it's a great expense to people in the country like us. They say that they are going to raise the duty upon spirits, which is really not treating us like gentlemen."

"Then we may get Ben Nevis whisky in London at a fair sort of price, I suppose, by-and-by?" said MacAndrew.

"Weel, I hope it may do you good; but I know that the London air is very bad after spirits. I was there ance, and I dined

wi' a friend of mine from the north at the Scotch Stores, and a coarse business we made of the walking home, although we had only just *a few* tumblers of toddy."

"I dare say one may take more whisky in the Highlands with impunity than in London; but drinking customs are now much changed everywhere, and I dare say that as commerce advances and the intercourse of north and south becomes more common, there will be a leaning in favour of temperance," said MacAndrew.

"Weel, I dare say," said Mr. Cameron; "my Angus there winna take a dram afore twelve o'clock for his mother!"

"By the way, Mr. MacArthur, can you put us all right here about this 'question' of Non-Intrusion that so very much disturbs the land at present?" asked MacAndrew.

“Weel, gentlemen, that is a very great question in our land, and one that you’ll see will work great work on the Establishment of Scotland ! If you’ll just pass the whisky, Mr. Cameron, and the brown sugar—I aye tak my toddy wi’ brown sugar and a wooden ladle when I’m at hame—we’ll see what we can say on that important national grand subject.”

Having arranged his tumbler and his chair, and having filled his pipe very slowly and lighted it, he began his explanation with much importance, emitting at every few words large volumes of tobacco smoke.

“Ye see, this patronage in the Kirk has been a gag in our mouths for many a long year. By the Crown and the Lairds we have been trodden down, so that we daur na speak against any minister that they chose to put into the pulpits. The Lairds

of the land do, in many cases, not attend our Kirk at all—preferring the Episcopal church, which, with all due deference, we hold as just next neighbour to Papacy; and they, therefore, take no interest in the Kirk nor her belongings; just letting things gang as they may. But when a Presentation is vacant, then they come out, and threp down our throats that they ken better than us wha to put in the pulpit; and in goes some dolt into our parish church who is not what the folk care to have at all. Now this is what we this day will not stand any longer—not at any risk—and you’ll soon see that on the great principle of Non-Intrusion a Free Church will be established throughout the country that will make the Establishment a nonentity! Is na that no the thing, friend Cameron, that I’m saying till the gentlemen?”

"Ay, is it, Mr. MacArthur; it's the God's truth, gentlemen, and nothing more. And if it's necessary there's plenty men in the Highlands that'll fight for it any day," said Cameron, on whom the toddy was beginning to operate.

"But suppose," urged MacAndrew, "that you had your own way; are you sure you would all agree about the qualifications of the minister whom you had to select and appoint? The Church Courts do it at present."

"Ay; but it's the *principle*, my good Sir, that we are fechtin' for. We want the right of *selection*."

"Well, I'm sorry to differ from you, gentlemen; and I really do not think that the Government should do away with its patronage, or the patronage of the proprietors—who are just as likely to make

good selections of preachers as the people—for the mere sake of placing the power in other hands.”

Mr. MacAndrew had here made a very decided mistake, if he wished to continue to live on good terms with his guests, and with his agricultural and pastoral neighbours. The guests both looked at him rather sulkily, and then at each other.

“Father,” said Angus Cameron, “you do not suppose that these gentlemen can see as you see in this matter? They are passers-by, and have different interests. I suppose that you’ll allow them to have their own opinion?”

“Whist, boy,” said his father. “Gang out and yoke the powney. I’m thinking we’ll be going, Mr. MacArthur!”

“Ay, ay,” was the response. “We have bided ower lang on our hosts. But they’ll excuse us now, I’m sure.”

"Don't go yet, gentlemen," said Forbes, rising up. "The night is early."

"Ah, weel, we hae a lang drive over the Muir, and I dare say it's time to be going."

"Well, here's good luck to you, in a *doch an dorris*; and I hope that you will soon be back again to join us in another stag hunt."

Doch an dorris, or stirrup cup, having been duly quaffed, though not required to produce a staggering appearance in our farmer friends, who had plied the "mixture" very diligently, the party broke up. With a little pulling and hoisting, they got seated in the conveyance, and young Angus drove off.

"You hit rather hard there, MacAndrew. Why did you raise that irksome question about Non-Intrusion at all? These men

will have a cankered feeling about us while we are here, now. That blessed Kirk ! It's the same story from Rome to Scraggan,—wherever the Church with its 'influence' appears, there you will find heartburnings and bickerings. I think there never will be peace among men while Churches prevail ! ”

“That's strong, Frazer. I often wondered what your private 'views' were ! ”

“Well, consider the distress that has been in this country about this cause. Remember the dreadful days of the Stuarts, when Scotland was turned into a land of blood for this same cry of the Church, although even a knowledge of it had not at that time, I dare say, got so far north as Scraggan, the enthusiasm then remaining among the Lowlands. And now, here comes up this renewed cry—always the same

—power to the people in religious matters. Down with constituted authority! Fight for God's sake! Love is at the root!"

"Well, I think that the people are showing much independence in this affair; and the Government should allow them to have the exclusive management of their Church matters. But it grows late, so we had better move off for a night," said Forbes.

"I hope all the folk in the land are not so touchy about the matter now-a-days as our guests seem to be. If so we shall have some excitement about us," said MacAndrew.

"You may rely on it that they are, and will give us evidence some day," said Forbes.

CHAPTER III.

THE close of autumn in the North of Scotland, with its fine, clear atmosphere, bracing mornings and evenings, is a pleasant time there for rural people. The heather—that purple glory of Scotland—is then in full bloom; and a Scotchman’s pride in looking at a hillside all ablaze with wild beauty, in the evening sunlight is very justifiable. Is it not the natural and true worship of a thankful soul—a sudden

elevation of the man which amounts to inspiration?

How many a gallant man has felt the influence of this Highland air, and this Highland inspiration, when, perhaps, in the later days of life, after many years of service in the tropics, and after passing through the dangers and the bruises of war, he again looks upon these scenes of health-giving beauty. We know that to many great Scotchmen—warriors and travellers—it has been new life; and to inhale again that autumn heathery air, long thought of and sighed for in India, has been recognized as a special privilege. Even the mention of the *heather-bell* has, it is said—being accompanied with the prospect of soon seeing it—made, at least, one old colonel shed tears of thankfulness and joy when *en route* (at Aden) for Craigellachie! Writing from an

Englishman's point of view, we should say that in the creation of Scotchmen there has been a sort of onesidedness in the matter ; as with all his reverence for his peats and bogs and his pines and crags—not to speak of his broze, butter, and stoups—he enjoys an additional world of life to the ordinary one of an Englishman, who is satisfied with his land in a plain state, growing good fruits and corn, providing him with his *requirements* without enthusiasm or Highland Flings. Why should a Scotchman—with large uncouth limbs, semi-emptiness of stomach, no wealth but that gathered in the rocks—have all this specialty in reference to his birthplace ? Was the vivacious dance of Tullochgorm or Gillie Callum forced into his tartan legs by the deep influence of his mountains, who, one might rather think, look down on him with the

sternness of a gloomy monitor, while he capers on the grassy knowie beneath? We do not know! But we know that many of those Scotchmen who are "spared" make wonderful men in many a pinch, when a person not favoured with early training on porridge and heather might fail. We doubt, in fact, that what the "well-favoured" world calls "bad usage" is not calculated to make a race happy!

"Plenty of the deep blue ozone this fine morning," said Frazer, opening up his window. "There's Donald and Hamish amusing themselves at the burnside, playing upon the trump, otherwise Jew's-harp. How odd that two such giants in form should be possibly acted upon by such a small touch of harmony! They seem to be fond of it too, and call the trumps 'unstrumments'."

The joyful ringing of the breakfast-bell, jingling loud enough to cause the black-faced sheep and the Highland calves in the neighbourhood to look round at the Lodge and listen to one of the wonders of civilization gathered there, collected promptly our friends of the field. Two wiry terriers, with nose and eyes as black and bright as glistening coal, and a sedate tortoiseshell cat, living all on good terms, joined the party at breakfast.

"A jolly day for the hills," said Forbes.

"Splendid!" said Frazer.

"How still our little world is now! Listen to the old raven among the rocks," said MacAndrew.

"I think he should be killed; he is death to many a bird and egg," said Frazer.

"Yes, but he is *our* raven, and therefore he must be 'spared.' I would not kill that

bird, more than I would kill that pet terrier."

"Pets are pets, no doubt," said Forbes. "I've known a Dutch farmer in the Binnieland of South Africa have always a young hyena or a young lioness for a pet. I was rather staggered one day going to his waggon, and lifting up the canvas after-fall, to be placed close face to face with a good sized lioness. She seemed astonished at my new face, but was not disturbed, and I was rather pleased to walk away and leave her at rest. Ostriches are often made domestic pets of, and are generally kept in pairs, as they take to waltzing as an amusement to themselves and the family. They waltz very well. To strangers, however, they are sometimes uncomfortable. They have a way of coming close up and lowering their heads down to one's level, and look-

ing earnestly into his eyes; if he proceeds they step back at the same pace, and if he retires they advance, still keeping their eyes steadfast in his face. A kick from an ostrich is as dangerous as from a horse, but they are not vicious by nature."

"Well, that's a strange fancy, certainly; and a smaller pet, even the raven, is much more suited to my taste. I thought hyenas were untameable beasts."

"Yes, they are. They never stay about a house; to keep them after they are puppies they must be tied up—they always make off."

"But how are they first caught?"

"Oh, we hunt them with dogs, and they make for their dens; then they may be watched. They are ugly customers when in a large troop, but will always run away from men and dogs, unless something un-

usual brings them to bay. To ride near them and watch their eyes as they look up is very interesting. They have such a strong desire for you and your horse, and show such a dislike to begin the battle. They are naturally cowardly, and seldom show fight if they can get off."

"Do you go out much after them as sport?"

"No; but they become very troublesome, destroying sheep and cattle. The Dutch farmers have taken to poisoning them with poisoned meat scattered over the country. But one is always meeting them, and their associates, the jackall—the noisy pest!"

"How do the deer get on with such associates?"

"They must trust to their fleetness. They are daily surrounded by all manner of dangers, in the woods and in the valleys, or

on the grass hills; everywhere they go they have enemies besides man. By the way, I remember a Scotchman, named Munro, from Greenock, making a remarkable escape from hyenas. He had outspanned his oxen on the journey to the Draakensberg in a valley where there was good water and grass, and in the evening sauntered out alone to gather in the cattle to proceed. He had some difficulty in getting the beasts together, from being unusually scattered and restive, and the gloaming of day found him yet a long way from his waggon. Suddenly he observed the oxen look round in an agitated manner, and then he became aware that a troop of hyenas was on his track. They came galloping up after him and the oxen at a hand-gallop. He had neglected to take a gun with him, and had nothing but a knife to protect him if they

came to close quarters. He had a stick in his hand, and with this and the knife he prepared for defence. The cattle of course were what the hyenas wanted particularly, Munro being a "foreigner" to their tastes. His description of how he escaped was often told by him with real Scotch earnestness. He had a very vulgar and, I regret to say, common custom of swearing when out of temper, and I think that all this journey with these savages after him must have been made during a passionate storm of curses, interspersed with short prayers for help from Heaven. According to himself, they all came up and sniffed him; and apparently the old Greenock trousers, in which I have heard him say there were at least '*twa pun o' threed* forbye patches and darns,' didna suit their fancy. They took a long look at his face, each of the fifteen

composing the pack taking turns of looking at him. As he used to say, 'I'm no bonny, and I was ower coarse-looking for them, but they were the coarsest looking monsters ever I set eyes on.' He had evidently an influence over them, however, that he did not seem to be aware of, as when they seemed most prepared to attack a particular ox, and when the ox became aware of it and ran faster Munro always sang out something in his usual broad Scotch strain, which seemed to have had a cautionary effect on the attacking party. All this time he was running with a firm hold of the tail of the wheel ox, *Trievaich*, who behaved faithfully to him, not going too fast. He spoke broad Greenock to the oxen, the hyenas, and to God Almighty for about six miles, imploring them all to help or to let him alone in this extremity. This may be used as an evi-

dence of the efficacy of Scotch prayer, as Munro arrived safe at the waggon with all his span of oxen. The hyenas left him when they came in sight of the waggon."

"A most uncomfortable exploit. He would not so carelessly go again to seek his span of oxen, I should say."

"But it did not end there. In the morning early, the Kaffir boy came from below the waggon, where he slept by the fire all night, to say that the neighbouring Dutchman's horses were surrounded by the same pack close to the waggon. And a strange sight it was to see the ring of horses, as Munro told me, their heads all out and held close to the ground for defence. They had formed themselves into a rallying square, and the hyenas walked round and round endeavouring to break in. Munro, nothing daunted by his trial the night before, but

rather burning for revenge, seized his gun, and with the Kaffir leader and driver, made a rush and a yell in the direction of the assault. At the same moment old Gert Schipper, the farmer, and one of his sons came galloping over the hill with their hounds, having now missed their horses; and the dogs setting up a chorus on sight of the hyenas, away the latter scampered. Munro, however, being near enough to get a long shot at them, fired, and his bullet was seen to fall short and ricochet on to the flank of one of them, who kept up a limping run till all were out of sight."

While our friends were thus chatting away the breakfast hour inside, the keepers outside the Lodge were lounging in a state of preparedness for action.

The tobacco smoke of the guests the previous evening, and a lassitude that gene-

rally follows an evening passed "in company," influenced the sportsmen lazily; they had no great desire for climbing the hill, and were taking things easy. Their servants were doing much the same. Sitting on large boulders of primitive rock at easy distance from the Lodge door, the murmuring brook running at their feet, Donald and his second sat "cracking." The "unstruments" were now supplanted by short cutty pipes, decorated in simple country style with brass chains, to which were attached suitable lids or covers. Both smokers sent large curls of smoke into the still clear air, with much apparent satisfaction.

"I'm thinking the maisters have a bumper in their heads the day, after their toddy wi' their friends last nicht," remarked Donald.

"It looks like it when they are no coming

to the hill yet, and this a bonny morning. Did you see Mr. MacArthur, decent man, making his way out o' the porch door last nicht? He wad hae been in the burn if I hadna keepit him. He couldna see a a styme after coming out frae the licht."

"Weel, weel, he's an elder of the Kirk, and we must make allowance."

"Folk say that that yellow powney o' his kens him fine. He taks him hame safe and sound frae many a market when he is a' the better o' a freend. He has a knack o' keeping him on the saddle, so that he canna fa'. But I heard that one nicht the elder got on wrang side foremost, and he never ken't till the powney put down his head to tak a drink at the burn, when the elder fell aff!"

"I dinna think that our maisters would gie them much encouragement last nicht. There's nane o' them ower fond o' the *piggie*."

" I heerd Jenny whisper that there was some words about the Non-Intrusion question, but the maisters canna care muckle about it I wad say. I suppose they are a' Episcopallians, if they bother about religion at all. What need hae they for Kirk when they are at the shooting ? "

" Weel, Hamish, yoursell and mysell are very independent o' Kirk, but, mind ye, the shooting ends wi' the season, and when there's nae shooting we maun mingle with others. So that a Kirk is necessary."

" More's the pity. Feint hae't o' comforts' in it forbye the baptizing."

" Ye nicht hae said the marriages too, man."

" Did ye ever see what they ca' a bishop, Donald, in the English Church ; he's worth seeing ony day ! The ane that I saw was a stout purty man ; he was six feet two, and

was broad in proportion, fully broader in fac'. He had a red head and his skin was as white as milk. His legs were tied close round wi' black spats, and he had a dadle on him for his wark, whatever it is, and his hat was tied wi' strings on the sides like a flunky's."

"That's the gentleman that was preaching at Gaskrua. I'm thinking he's weel ken't in the land; and ance now an' again o' him is enough. He tell't the folk that if they didna believe what he tell't them they wad a' gang to hell hopeless!"

"Godsake! Donald, and is na that a bad religion? That's worse than our Mr. Mac-Connochie yet!"

"Ye may well say that, Hamish, and it's a wonder to me daily that such quiet decent men as our maisters there and others forbye can put up wi' such a clash o' nonsense."

“Div ye think, now Donald, that Him that made a’ our bonny hills and the bonny lochs and woods, and sic like, would really in earnest put us a’ in hell for what we can do here? Even sheep-stealing is no hanging now-a-days among oursells.”

“Whist, Hamish, I’m thinking the gentlemen are coming.”

And now a pattering of heavy tacketts-and-boots, and a bolt of the terriers to get to the front, proclaimed that our friends the sportsmen were on the move.

“All ready, Sirs,” said Donald, saluting his masters.

“What about the dogs?” said Forbes.

“I have sorted out the freshest dogs, Sir, just two pair, Flora, Rover, Dash, and Bran. I suppose we’ll go straight up to the high ground, as the sun is so bright the day. The birds will sit very bonny, Sir,”

"Are you good for the high ground, Frazer, to-day? It will do your headache good, I should think. Or what do you say to go over to Strathfarrach to look for black game?"

"No; I'll rather go with the dogs to the high ground. I won't have it said that Brackla got the better of me! My headache will go off like the fumes of Mr. Cameron's pipe last night, when we get up a bit."

"Very weel, gentlemen, we may as well go at ance. By taking up the face o' Ben Boorach we will save twa miles, so we had better make a beginning, and go up this crannie till we get on to the foot o' the big hill," said Donald, as the party proceeded to walk up the heathery wall before them.

"They have real good wind, and there's plenty of travel in these dogs, Sir," said

Donald. "I wadna wonder if we had the best bag yet the day."

After all, there are few things that will test a man's strength and endurance more than walking up a long hill, particularly if he has to carry a heavy double-barelled muzzle-loader of the old school, and to be prepared for odd shots all the time.

When an hour had been spent in this exercise, some of our friends began to feel rather blown, but Donald was an inexorable keeper, and progress upwards was still the word. Then Frazer came upon a beautiful clear spring running down the hill in a narrow rivulet, with bright green grass and moss for a bed, and here he claimed "time."

"This is the head of the fountain, Donald, I should suppose, and we ought not to pass it. Hamish, come here, and hand over your dogs to the *gimmach* to take care of while

you fill that decanter of water. I must say my head is not cool, and there might be medicine in a horn of that beautiful water if mixed with a dram."

"Take cold tea," said Forbes. "There is nothing like cold tea on the hill in hot weather. I always find relief if not support from it, and whisky and water excite one."

"Yes, if you take too much," said MacAndrew, "but there's no occasion for doing that. I think a dram is a very good thing on the hill."

"Thank you, MacAndrew, for that sustaining hint; I very nearly gave way to our friend's persuasion. What do *you* think, Donald, about whisky on the hill? I dare say you know more of hills and whisky than any of us."

"Weel, Sir, I am safe to say that bad whisky is really a bad thing on the hill,

but a good dram is not a bad thing at all, at all."

Having said so much, Donald was prepared to give further evidence by a practical test, and after a dram and a "piece," meaning thereby about two pounds of meat and bread compressed together and held fast with butter, was handed round to each keeper and gillie, and a slighter refecton partaken by the gentlemen, the ascent was resumed and then the dogs called up to be let loose when they had gained the base line of their day's action.

"And now, gentlemen, we will scatter. Mr. Forbes, if you'll go on the right, Mr. Frazer in the centre, and Mr. MacAndrew on the left."

On the word to "Hold up," the two beautiful dogs opened the day's sport by moving away quickly to the front and sniffing the

air as they roved over the moor from right to left. Presently Flora appeared to have received a shock, and suddenly stood perfectly still. That wonderful power developed in dogs of unhesitatingly ceasing to advance when their sense of smell detects the presence of game! And the sense of smell seems not more wonderful than the art to which dogs are trained in showing man where his game lies covert.

“Flora is as stiff as a biscuit,” said Frazer, “and Rover is diligently backing her.”

“To-ho!” said Donald encouragingly, holding up his hand in communication with the still dogs, who then slowly ventured to cast a part of a look at the keeper to satisfy themselves that their position was observed.

“Move up, gentlemen; Hamish, mark the birds when they go down. Now then!”

Then, one, two, three guns went off.

Then a short pause, and one, two, three guns went off again; a pause, during which Donald pronounced the words "Down charge," and the dogs went down in the long heather as if to rest; their heads still facing in the same direction and still observing the same solemnity in their conduct. A fluttering here and there in the heather indicated the death of game. Then the gentlemen having loaded their guns (it is thirty years ago), handling powder-flask, wad, shot-bag, wad, cap, and cocking in a minute or two, advanced slowly in rear of the dogs, who rose up at the word to "Seek dead." Then the dead birds, one to each barrel, were gathered, and the dogs proceeded still slowly to look for further scent. After much careful sniffing and inquiring Rover seemed to have found a treasure, and Flora observing the fact immediately adopted

a stillness and a direction of her nose in the quarter indicated, as desiring to give assurance of the fact. Frazer walked slowly up, and corroborated both dogs by shooting a single bird that had remained on the ground, and was pronounced by him to be the fool of its family; then, that work being completed, the dogs moved away again to look for more ground, which to them for the time, would be as holy ground, occupied by rare things.

With varied success, for many hours, they marched over the ground that day, and as the light was becoming fainter they neared the Lodge. When descending the hill and in sight of their home, they were astonished to observe strangers about the doors, and that some unwonted commotion was going on. In answer to a question put to him, the keeper said that he had been

endeavouring to make out what was astir, but was at a loss.

“It canna be ony body brought to the house dead suddenly, nor is it half sae likely that it’s the messengers, though the men have a greedy hungry kind o’ look ; but I’m thinking I’m nae far wrang in saying now that it’s nane other than the gaugers themselves ! And they dinna want for impudence in their calling—coming to the very door o’ gentlemen’s houses smelling after sma’ stills. Confound their sneaking nebs ! See what a queer lot they are to be ca’d Her Majesty’s officers. I think she has made a bad bargain when hiring such raff !”

There was much to do on arriving at the Lodge, all the inhabitants and a few neighbours had assembled to see the upshot of what appeared a case of interest ; a Still for

the manufacture of illicit whisky had been discovered by the officers in the immediate neighbourhood of the Lodge, and suspicion pointed to the people there as being implicated in the crime. Up till the time of the arrival of the gentlemen on the scene of inquiry nothing had been in any way elicited from the people, and jeers and threats had freely passed on both sides—the law officers being the minority getting a disproportioned share of abuse and contempt. Having advanced to the sportsmen, the senior officer of the party stated his case, and said that he had no doubt he and his party would receive from the gentlemen “civil treatment,” which he added was a thing “unco scarce” with the servants.

“We shall be glad to aid you in any way you may direct in this matter,” said Forbes; “if you can satisfy us that you have any

just suspicion of any of our people. For myself, I fancy that the use of whisky, got for the making of it, just at our doors would have shown itself among the people if they had been in the way of using it at all."

"Well, Sir, we must do our duty, and if you will allow me I will call James or Hamish Macfarquhar to investigate him first; and I must also beg that you, gentlemen, will stay and hear us out, as with your presence we may get order and some sort of fair play, but if you leave us with these people, there is no saying what may come about."

"The people are surely very quiet and orderly," said Forbes; "I never saw them otherwise."

"That may be, Sir; but we excisemen are just looked on as so many legalized plunderers that have the right to rush in

where we think fit, and plunder them, as they ca' it, of their three-legged pots and other illegal utensils in their use in the making of whisky. They canna bide the very sight of us, and their backs bristle up like terriers whenever we pass the glens. So just use your discretion, gentlemen, and help us in the Queen's name."

Hamish, having been called over to the conclave, was asked if he could give any information on the subject, but had no knowledge of it—never heard of the sma' still near the burn.

"Now, James, or Hamish, which is the same thing, canna you, like an honest man, say what ye really ken about the business? You must have knowed of malt being brought there by somebody, and I'm no wanting to implicate you if you wad just say what you ken about it."

"No, I don't know nothing about it," said Hamish doggedly.

"Toot, man Hamish, ye ken something surely. Have you been going out and in hereabouts all this time, and never got a dram from a neighbour which was a smuggled dram?"

"Dram here, or dram there, that's a' I ken about it, and I have my dogs till sort, so that I'll be going to the kennel."

"Stop a wee, my man; I kenned I might as well try to churn butter out o' stanes as get the truth out o' you; but I have something here that I found at the mouth o' the worm, and if you dinna own the truth, you'll see that this will be a Fiscal job for you. That bicker is yours — and there's your name on it. I for Hamish! now what say you?"

"I'm saying this, Mr. Gauger, that if

you try to gie me a bad name wi' my maisters there stan'ing, I'll gie you a clink on the crown that may be you'll no like, and that'll be the end o' it."

"Hamish, if you know anything, pray tell the officer all about it," said Forbes.

"Tell him anything, Sir! I have nae-thing to say till him, but if he was worth his lugs he would hand over the drap whisky he has seized to the neighbours to keep them warm in a cold night when they're in want."

By this time the onlookers had gathered closer and closer, and were part of the audience, and this speech from Hamish raised a loud laugh at the expense of the excisemen.

"Put them in the burn" was said by some one in the crowd, and a general pushing and a breaking up of order was visible.

"Now folk, keep back," said the officer,

"I warn ye all that the Queen's officers mauna be tampered with on duty!"

"Deil pron ye, and your duty too," said an old woman smiling maliciously in the man's face. "If ye maltreat my wee Hamish, I'll make hawks' meat o' ye afore the sun gaes down." This also created a loud laugh.

"Now we must have silence here" cried Forbes at the top of his voice, and assuming a commanding attitude. "Donald, come here, and you gentlemen of the excise please to follow me to the Lodge." This decision came very opportunely, as the excisemen were armed with stout sticks and were quite capable and prepared to defend themselves in case of need. But Forbes's authority was recognized when the Queen's was doubtfully honoured, and the excise party moved away, and the crowd did not follow. They passed the Lodge under

escort of the gentlemen and took the path leading on to the main road.

“Our countrymen have very marked prejudices,” said MacAndrew, “and I hardly know how far to excuse them.”

“They seem to care for whisky more than law,” said Frazer. “That old mother of Hamish seemed to have had a drop too, out of that very same Still perhaps?”

And certain wild piping and dancing that night in Hamish’s bothie seemed to indicate that a triumph was being danced there. The sportsmen never could prevail on any of the people to say anything decisive about the event of that day, and even the demure Jenny, the housekeeper, waived off the subject quietly.

CHAPTER IV.

THE post runner to Scraggan came only three times in the week ; and in these days Scraggan was considered advantageously situated for postal communication. There was an eagerness on the post-days at the Lodge, and much longing for the man who carried the bag containing the news of private friends, as well as public intelligence. He was generally rewarded with a dram on his arrival, which liberality ensured more

attention on the part of this man of importance, albeit several similar liberalities were ensured *en route* to and beyond Scraggan.

“Nothing in the Scotch papers but Free Church matters, I see,” remarked Forbes, laying down the *Inverness Courier* of that morning.

“No accounts of sport? Surely! Oh, yes, here we are. The Honourable Simon and party—lots of bags—whew! plenty of game. Yes—Scraggan party also. Wonder how these chaps get their reports—always right, too; perhaps Donald is chartered by the publishers to send in literature and notes for the district; and—holloa! what is this about the west coast? This looks like a row. I suspect our country people are changing for the worse. The *douce* character seems to be fast giving way to

one of a semi-devilish kind. Listen to this :—

‘ WEST COAST NEWS.

‘ Attack upon Sir George Brown, Bart.—
This gentlemen has been the tenant of the late Sir Alfred Jones for many years, under a lease, which is still current, of the house and shooting of Sportmore. Some difference had arisen out of this transaction ; but between the people of the country and Sir George there was no cause of quarrel. Unconscious, therefore, of the feeling of any hostility on their part towards him, he was much surprised last week to receive a letter subscribed “The Tenants of Sportmore,” requiring him to leave the house within a given number of hours, and intimating that, if he disregarded this intimation, they would proceed to attack him and compel him to quit ! Sir George desired

the bearer of this strange letter to inform the people—a party of whom were assembled in the vicinity in a state of great excitement increased by whisky—that he had not interfered, nor wished to interfere with them ; but that if they should attempt to carry their threat into execution it would be at their own peril. He then made preparation for defence, and waited the issue. From the promptitude and decision of Sir George, and the apparent determination of the people, it was fully expected that there would be blood shed. The people, however, cooled, the time specified in the letter expired, and no violence was committed. The local authorities were soon afterwards on the spot, and several men having been seized, the others dispersed.’ ”

“That is very serious as indicating what you say about the people But these west-

coast people are not like our jaunty, lively fellows on the east coast, who would rather dance than riot. These west people often live like some sort of sea-animal—having very few of the characteristics of the Scotch generally. They live principally on fish, of their own taking, of course; and have no intercourse with human beings almost beyond their own shores. Their lives are passed in idleness and filth, and I believe them to be about the lowest type of man in this latitude. The sooner some patriot removes them from such a life the better, by translating them to Canada, where they will find a soil to give them wholesome food, and animate them with better ideas of life.”

“And still,” said Forbes, in answer to this tirade of MacAndrew’s, “it seems hard that these men should have to move away

for want of occupation ; or from the fact of their lives being passed in the idle service of planting potatoes and catching fish."

"But you must allow," said MacAndrew, "that men become inferior men living so, and grow up uneducated, uncouth creatures. And when will it cease to be so, while the soil is what it is ; and no hope apparent of any commerce reaching their shores ? Generations of these people have lived huddled together ; grandfathers living in the same wretched state with the grandchildren, and still there is little change for the better. I think it should be made a national question. Creatures claiming to be the Queen's subjects, though knowing none of the language ! Having no hope of any advancement by any natural resources, they are in much the same position as waste land that should be reclaimed if possible by some one, but no

person can be found so patriotic as to advance the capital for the object. It would make me wretched to own such soil, and to have such vassals."

"Cannot the clergy, who are the promoters of every benign advancement, create in these people a new life, and endeavour to show them the necessity of doing some good," asked Frazer.

"The clergy have no doubt endeavoured to do their best; and I know that the clergy of the old Catholic Church have made many good scholars, men and women, in one district there. But where the head of the house has a boat in which he can catch fish, and while the landlord gives him land enough to grow potatoes, the clergy have little influence. The men feel that as far as these necessities go, they are supplied; and they will not be influenced beyond this

miserable exertion, to elevate themselves or their children."

"How much of this is owing to climate, think you? Is it not a state that many men among them must see to be wrong, and yet are obliged to submit to?"

"I think that the natural instinct of man is to elevate, not to deteriorate, and that this same Scotch walrus now lying on that west coast may be on a tidal wave of elevation in slow motion! Suppose such a thing, for instance, as a railway making its way to that depth of tangled obscurity! Would not he then wake up from his lethargy—shake his watery tresses, and come forth like you, MacAndrew, and your forefathers as a working man? How many generations back is it since your forefather was sitting on the Galloway coast watching the growth of mussels?—and would *you* not now

be doing so had *he* not found that the march of men was on him, and that he must dig more or barter better to enable him to hold his own ? ” asked Frazer.

“ A railway to the west coast is an utter absurdity, Frazer ; and that, you nor I will ever see. But, meantime, I think that it is a sin to our country that so much material should lie there idle, which might be so well employed in the rich woods of Canada.”

“ Of course, where there is soil there will be progress, and I must say that I can see little hope for the west-coast man in that way ; but he has flocks of sheep, has he not ? ”

“ Yes, there are sheep, but one shepherd can herd a lot of sheep with a good colley dog ; and then, again, sheep farmers prefer the more intelligent man from the south of

Scotland to look after their herds. He has more sense in business matters, as he has had the advantages of civilization."

"Gentlemen, I neglected," said Forbes, "what I intended telling you, as the most important part of this morning's correspondence. Here is an invitation from that gallant old friend the General. He hopes that we can all go to the other side for a day or two ere the season closes."

"He is certainly a most excellent neighbour, and is most kind."

"I suppose I may say for all of us that we will be too glad to accept?" asked Forbes.

"Undoubtedly."

"Certainly."

This having been arranged, and the letter duly posted, the friends betook themselves to their correspondence for the day. Mean-

time let us speak of the friend whose house they purposed visiting the following day.

General French, at present tenant of the Mansion House, shooting and fishing of Balvournie, had served long in the army in India, the Cape, and latterly, with the usual consideration for the health of the troops observed by the War Office, in Canada. He had just returned to his native country, having, in his absence from it, acquired rank, honours, and fortune; a considerable portion of the latter by marriage. He was now a widower, with an only daughter—a lady of twenty-two, much admired and courted everywhere for her many good qualities, and for her singular beauty. She was devoted to her father, and a more affectionate parent and child never existed. The very dread of parting with her father had been the direct means of her discarding

more than one most advantageous offer of marriage. The General was remarkable for his kindly disposition and his hospitality, and wherever he was known he was universally esteemed.

The house of Balvournie was a large well-constructed mansion in the Scotch baronial style, situated on the slope of a long promontory that jutted out into the Loch, from which land and house derived their name. The house was well surrounded with very fine specimens of old hardwood trees of the country, including ash, elm, and sycamore, with abundance of shrubbery and lawn. Much expense had been incurred in maintaining the grounds in a manner suited to the style of the mansion, and handsome terraces and elegant fountains marked the place as belonging to one of taste and means. The present owner of the

property was a minor, and at school in Germany, but the will of the late proprietor made the care of the house and grounds a matter of especial regard, and it was a fortunate circumstance that in General French the trustees found one who fully appreciated the art and taste displayed, and who willingly did everything in his power to maintain them. The property had long remained in the hands of the same family; and as they were residents during almost all that time, the good results were apparent on the scene. There was a sublimity about the well-cared place that was a permanent memorial in honour of the respectable men who had dealt faithfully with what had been given them in trust, and the lands and the woods, and the house and name of Balvournie, were held in respect by all the country far and wide.

To this handsome home, then, General French and his daughter had become so far, as tenants, sponsors for its care, and they entered on the trust with due veneration and regard. The well-trimmed walks and clean close lawn, the carefully kept shrubs and trees, all denoted care in the supervision of the domain. An ancient rookery, with its busy population of unscathed crows, made jocund chorus in the woods; and a spacious dovecot, like a Roman tower, gave homes for many flocks of tumbling and wheeling pigeons. Such a place had many charms for General and Miss French, and also for their numerous guests, for the General was fond of seeing happy people near him.

The district generally was a rich agricultural one, the tenant farmers differing in little respect from that of the far-advanced

agriculturists of the South of Scotland, whose intelligence and energy have placed them in the front rank of men of this generation. The population of the villages was in every respect different from the people occupying the Highland part of the country, the Celtic language being entirely foreign to them ; and the usages of the old Scottish people as known nearer the Firth of Forth were there in vogue, much more than those of the neighbouring Highlands, to whom they were a great contrast. Here the people may be characterized as the after-growth of that tribe of Norsemen who sailed into our Firths and Lochs, and by dint of their solid and enduring spirit, tilled, invigorated, and appropriated the land—a race which it would seem the land in the natural current of events demanded to be its master. And the rich loams and

abundant trees and grass were subjects to invite the regard of a strong people.

Our friends among the wilds of Scraggan had now, on the day appointed for the visit, made all the preparations necessary. Instructions had been given to Donald about the affairs of the house, and about their letters which were to be sent to Balvournie. The Highland pony, a strong, well-built little animal, was to drive them all the distance, and Hamish was in attendance as coachman; a large blue overcoat, with the standard plate button, rather enlarged, encased him to the boots, and barring the *ferntagles* or freckles which were profusely distributed over his face, he looked tolerably civilized. Each lighting a cheroot, they bade good-bye affectionately to Jenny and the keeper at the door, and mounted the phaeton. The dogs in the kennel who could get a partial

view of the separation scene of their masters, set up a vigorous declamation; and the two wiry terriers, who were to be thus suddenly deprived of their best friends, made a desperate attempt to follow, but Jenny shut them in and scolded them with much vigour.

“Well, it’s a bonny place, and real Highland, but we would deteriorate living there always,” said Frazer, as they turned the end of the birch wood that hid out the cottage from their view. “Providence has evidently made the Highlands for a hunting-ground, as He has made the lowlands to carry crops; and while the hills carry grouse and deer, there the Celt will mingle with them, and parsons may preach to him even in Gaelic, and the resurrection from the dead will not be more hopeless a task than thoroughly reclaiming the man before the soil. Look

there, however, at the triumph of harvest ! That's old Scorryvarrich's crop, two stacks of oats and a long grave of potatoes ! See the ingenious natural chimney he has made for the damp to escape from the potatoes—a straw wisp standing on end. And the oat stacks, though most comfortable in their winter coat of broom, will require watching to prevent fire-damp occurring in the interior."

"It looks a poor affair for a man to waste his life over, surely," said MacAndrew, "but is he not happy there?"

"Well, in a way, I dare say he is; and especially when he gets a half anker of whisky into the house, as he calls that bing of divets."

"What about his children?"

"Oh! he has a lassie at home to make his meat for him' as they say, and Rory

listed last year. The mother, of course, does all the out-door work."

"And this is native peasant life?"

"I know," said Forbes, "that a Kaffir would not live in so wretched a hut as Scorryvarrich's. He would have it dry and swept; and although the Bible would be wanting in it, so would the half anker of whisky."

"Do you mean that a Kaffir is better off than our own countrymen—and we always sending out missionaries to Fikusland to transform him to a resemblance to the British subject!"

"I mean that I wish I could see all such wretchedness as I see here in the Highlands transferred to the Kaffirland; and while I do not blame people here sending out missionaries to teach Christianity, I do blame them, whoever is to blame, for permitting

such home degradation to go on from one generation to another."

"But how?" asked MacAndrew, "are savages like Kaffirs ever to learn the great eternal truths of salvation unless we teach them? We cannot neglect them."

"And I suppose I am entitled to call Scorryvarrich a revived being, as he is under the impression no doubt that he knows all about the Gospel? I think that it would be becoming in the minister, or any other man, and perhaps particularly the Laird, to insist on old Scorry and his family acquiring a knowledge of dirt and cleanliness as well as a knowledge of the Catechism. He can keep his religious notions to himself, but he cannot hide his dirt and itch."

"But what would you do with him. Is the country not to have a peasantry?"

"I would not encourage him to live like

a hen, scratching up some yards of land there. Rather let him serve men who have arable land to plough, and who have capital to work it, than have him there representing a class of *independent* farmers in his misery and squalor."

"Are there many such men as he in the land?" asked MacAndrew.

"Yes, among the Highland people. How proprietors do not object to them I do not know! I suppose it is the so-called patriots of the press who, when a number of these lazy fellows are told to 'move on,' make a fuss and deter the landlord from doing his duty. The men who speak loudest, I dare say, know least about it and are more abusive."

"The land tenure everywhere seems a difficult question."

"I think," said Frazer, "that the day

may come, when all these lands may be worked by giant companies, with all the improved machinery that capital can produce, and men living in London—the natural home of every good man who has money—will talk over their ten per cent. returns on the Morayshire Sandy Oats Company; and the increasing demand for the stock of the Eastern Ross and Sutherland Soil Combination; or the Double-delving and Dyking Company of Portmahomack. I don't see why there should be a sentimental limit put to the occupancy of land more than mining or dredging or anything else."

"Would you abolish the large class of farmers who are really the pride of Scotland, and substitute your Limited Liability Companies?"

"No, *I* wouldn't do it. But I dare say it will come to it. Landlords already will

remove any old tenant or family, although their forebears have been there for generations, if a man from any other country will give them more rent."

"Ay," said Forbes," 'poverty parts guid company.' There is often a fear that the Lairds are worse off than the tenants now-a-days. But whoever does it, or whoever gets the benefit or the loss, the land must be cultivated. Our one great compulsory duty is to till the ground, and right or wrong it must be done by some one. The nowt *will* have pasture and turnips, and cannot depend and thrive on the hill-tops, like the deer; and whoever cultivates best is the better rewarded, as the soil is generous, and will return amply any good you do it."

"How the character of the country changes here! The wildness is subdued by

cultivation; and in so short a time as our journey will occupy this afternoon, we may say that we will have seen two distinct countries and people."

"How delightful a drive is at this season—just cold and frosty enough to make the air bracing! But what noise is that I hear occasionally! Is it singing?"

"It's the preachings," said Hamish, who was a silent listener all this time to the comments of his betters on the situation of their country.

"Oh! yes; we are fortunate in thus having an opportunity of seeing one of the sights of the land."

On the slope of a grassy hill, not more than one hundred yards from the public road, the congregation of the church in the neighbourhood had gathered to listen to the open-air preaching of their leaders in

spiritual matters. As a sight it was imposing. The elder matrons almost invariably wore the hooded mutch or cap of clean linen, which has a resemblance to the somewhat extravagant cap of the Norman peasantry ; the very old women, again, were robed in long red or blue cloaks, which also surmounted their heads in the form of a hood. Then the gay tartans of the younger folk, gave the scene a bright and cheerful look. The earnestness of the preacher seemed to quite absorb the attention of the people, and they gave solemn heed to the words which he administered to them. There was nothing but decorum and stillness among the listeners, and not a moment seemed to be wasted in hesitation by the preacher. He spoke in loud, clear words, which struck on the ears of our sporting friends like the regular chime of

a ship's bell when a funeral is about to take place on board ship. His words were accompanied by a heaving movement, and the right hand was continuously lifted up, clenched, and brought down again into the palm of the other hand. He was bareheaded, and dressed in the usual black dres-scoat, etc., of the Scotch clergy; he perspired profusely, and occasionally drew from his waistcoat a large blue and white spotted cotton handkerchief, with which he polished his face and rubbed his hair. His manner of delivery indicated that he was engaged in denouncing and affirming something; and judging from the man's expression of face, as well as the action of his body, that something was to his hearers nothing less than eternal considerations. This our friends were confirmed in from the few words they were able to catch while passing slowly along the road.

“What a power he has over these people in his aptness of speaking, and in his position of recognized teacher and propounder. Would these people ever find their way to Heaven, that natural rest for worn-out man, without that man’s guidance?”

“I would not like to be called upon by my conscience at this moment to go before these people and propound any other doctrine than his. I suppose I would die the death of Saint Stephen shortly,” said Frazer.

“Do you think that life can be joyful to these people who are so constantly directed to beware of hell, which is so often set forth as being so near them? or if a doubt of the reality of the truth should come to their minds, what would be the result to the preacher?”

“They are taught from infancy never to doubt at all, and a man who doubted

the doctrines as laid down by the preachers in the pulpits, would possibly be publicly tabooed by the rulers in the Presbyterian Church."

"Oh! Frazer my friend you must know them more intimately to judge them fairly. But, listen, now they are singing a psalm. That is the healing oil that is spread over the tender nerves and sensibilities of the hearers. The senses, if not the convictions, are open more to influences through sounds than words—they may create or establish a faith in peculiarly constituted minds. How well assorted the sounds and cadence are to the scene! That 'giving out the line' has really something striking in it, also, and it is thus that the Presbyterian sanctifies his glens and hills, while the Romanist or Episcopalian takes emblems to effect it in the Church."

"I suppose we need all our time, Forbes, to get to Balvournie before dark? I think we may move faster."

"Go on, Hamish."

"Erurch," said Hamish, giving the pony an impatient slash, as if he wished to get out of hearing of the psalm.

And in time came the woody country and House of Balvournie. A different land entirely.

"How dark the approach is," said Frazer, "and how grand! Look into that ancient sycamore; it is as black as a 78th Highlander's bonnet! I feel when coming here, to what is the finer part of existence as we find it with the General and his charming daughter, like a terrier who has been reared in the bothie when suddenly transferred to the drawing-room. Even this I

confess I feel when dressed in my dress-kilt and Cairngorms ! ”

“ Put your modesty in your sporran, man ; you’ll get no credit for it.”

And here the General came out to meet his friends and welcome them with his usual hospitality.

CHAPTER. V.

THE guests of General French at the House were, besides our three friends, the Rev. Mr. Edwards, a clergyman of the Church of England, and his wife, relatives of the late Mrs. French. A neighbouring tenant farmer, Captain Vere, who once was an officer in the Royal Navy, and his daughter, a young lady of modest and delicate manners, were asked to join the dinner party on the day of the arrival of the three new guests.

The first bell for dinner "went" shortly after the arrival, and our friends had time, not more than enough, to make themselves presentable ere the second bell resounded through the house.

The general had real pleasure in introducing each and all of his friends in the drawing-room, and escorting them to the dining-room. An excellent dinner was there, and the clergyman said a most appropriate grace, and the three men from the mountains felt that here was the natural state of civilized man, and that to be better off anywhere else would be impossible, and that if it were not for a feeling that they were yet perfumed with the Scraggan peats, they would be really happy. Frazer looked very handsome in his Highland dress of the hunting tartan of the clan, richly adorned with Cairngorms and gold fastenings and

brooches. The others were in the consecrated dress of respectability, acknowledged everywhere, like Freemasonry.

"A most excellent harvest we have had, General, and well secured," said Captain Vere, in reply to the General's question. "There was never greater plenty in this quarter, and we would have contentment as well as riches among the people were it not for this commotion about the presentations to the churches."

"Yes, it is a pity that such a disturbance should be raised, but I fear there will be much ado about this Church business yet," answered the General. "What sort of sport have you had, gentlemen, up among the hills?"

"Very fair; the birds were numerous, but rather wild. Forbes shot a stag, which was something unusual," said Frazer.

"Poor thing," said Mrs. Edwards; "it must have been sad to kill so beautiful a creature."

"I agree with you, Mrs. Edwards, that it is sad that such pretty things should be destroyed for sport," added Miss French.

"But, my dear daughter, if men were not to use the pretty creatures as wild beasts should be used, who would do it? and then they would overrun the lowlands, perhaps!"

"A good excuse, papa, no doubt, and I suppose I must accept it."

"And then, again, talking of making excuses, what about the venison? Is it not as right to eat venison as anything else?"

"Oh! I beg of you, papa, to consider that I am quite satisfied with the excellent reason for such sports which you first gave."

"No doubt there is much to be said in favour of venison, especially the haunch,

and no reason why gentlemen should not make sport among the hills—bracing up their strength—if the sport of deer-stalking is attractive to them,” argued the clergyman.

“Now, Miss French, having the clergy on our side, I trust your mind is made easy on the point,” added Frazer.

“But Mr. Edwards came to *my* help in the matter ; to relieve *my* distress.”

“I fear,” said Miss Vere, “that the gentlemen needed no persuasion to convince them that what they did was proper.”

“But it was Forbes, not I, who shot the deer ; I missed it, although I admit doing my best to kill it.”

“No doubt,” said Miss French ; “you are all much the same in your sports.”

“There is a rhyme which, if I quoted it, would be appropriate, I think,” said Miss

Vere, "although silly-looking—'Let dogs delight, etc.'"

"It cannot apply to us, Miss Vere."

"But you do delight to bark and bite at deer," said Miss French.

"Well, I for one shall be glad to rank among your pets when you take a favourable view of little puppies," said Frazer.

"Oh, oh, Mr. Frazer, how clever you are! Mrs. Edwards, I think we shall have to snub this would-be pet."

"I think, Frazer, you will require all your cleverness to evade the ladies if they undertake to snub you," laughed the General.

"Forbes, will you kindly pass that decanter which you seem to have such a contempt for. Come, Vere, these fellows from the hills are but poor hands at passing the decanter after all. One would have thought

they would be thankful for such delicacies. Come, Mr. Edwards, join us."

"Thank you, General."

And after some talk of small matters, very pleasant in themselves, a rustling of dress, followed by a general rising from the table, and away sailed the ladies to the drawing-room, leaving the gentlemen to their own devices; which took the form of first drinking health to the ladies, and then settling down opposite the decanters. Thirty years ago, when time was not so valuable, men did remain longer in that situation than they do now. The influence of the customs of the last century had still a hold.

"Strange affair that up at Sir George's," said Captain Vere.

"Very," said the General. "But I never could bear these people up on that coast. There's no fun in them, nor wit.

nor humour, nor anything that I could admire."

"They're very religious, I hear," said Frazer, with a twinkle in his eye as he looked at the parson.

"Oh, religious! I dare say we may have more of that kind of religion about us here than may be good for us," laughed the General.

"Well, I can hardly see how men can speak of being religious who use violence in words and actions," said Mr. Edwards.

"The people hereabouts of the low class are very headstrong about this Church presentation business, and they say that a row will take place when the new man is to be 'placed,' as it is called," said Captain Vere.

"To me it is quite incomprehensible," said the clergyman, "how people should, after so many years of settled ways in

Church government, suddenly rise up against authority, and with so much virulence."

"But," said Forbes, "they have a conscientious conviction that this is a matter demanding their voice, and they are not without precedent in the history of the Scotch Church in making their voice heard in such a case."

"But they have no case," argued MacAndrew; "it is simply will the Crown give up its power to these noisy people. I hope they will not; as, if in that, why not in any other matter?"

"Oh! the 'Answer to the Church Assembly' has been issued by the Government already," said Captain Vere, "and the Government objects to abrogate the rights of the Crown and other patrons. So there's an end of it as far as Government goes.

The only important consideration is how will the people generally act in such cases as this same presentation in our neighbourhood, where a minister will be presented to a church when the people do not desire him. They will no doubt in many cases leave the church, and then they will elect their own ministers, and act as any other Dissenters."

"Well, if they do it quietly, I do not see what difference it will make," said Frazer.

"But the Government must keep up the established religion of the land, and have an established ministry and schools, while no person will attend them," said the clergyman.

"Well, let them shut them up, and leave all to the Dissenters," said Frazer. "I see no duty in keeping up an establishment that is distasteful."

"Well, that is simply overturning order

that disorder may prevail," urged MacAndrew, "and I would not give in so readily.. I have no doubt that these humbugs, or enthusiasts, the preachers who leave the establishment, will make capital out of the *tyranny* that the Government will use in not knuckling down at once to them."

"But what can it matter to the Government," asked Frazer, "what the people do in religious matters?"

"It is Church government, man, and not religion at all, although I do not doubt the ministers who go out will point out that it is one and the same thing. What heroes we will have among them! I can fancy them boasting to their flocks of what they sacrificed when they threw aside the flesh pots of the Establishment, and embraced the glorious cause of the Free Church. You may rely on it that an Establishment man,

of any grade, will have a life of misery if these patriots have their own way."

"Will the souls of the people be not more Christian under the Free Church than the Establishment though?" asked Frazer.

"Well, I think gentlemen you are disposed for fun on this subject, and I do not feel so lightly interested in it; perhaps you will allow me to join the ladies," said the Reverend Mr. Edwards as he left them for the drawing-room.

"Sad thing squabbling in a country," said General French.

"Sad thing Church, General, I think," said Frazer; "wherever there is a church there is sure to be war."

"It often has happened that a feeling little better than war has arisen out of Church matters such as these," said the General.

"Did I ever tell you," asked Frazer, "about my being almost ejected from a meeting-house in England."

"No, I think not; tell us about it."

"Well, one Sunday evening in the ancient city of Chester, I was alone, and sauntering out among the venerable old Rows as they are called, and along the famous old wall, I obeyed the pressure of a general current of people which carried me down a street and into the meeting-house, and a crowd of earnest-looking dumbies sat there. The preacher came and entered rapidly into his work, which was simply creating a sort of terror, ending in hysterics with the women and agitation in the men. He appealed to them, one and all, to come now, that very moment, and to where he preached, and make a declaration aloud that they were converted! Many did so, but there were

many not quite sufficiently satisfied to rise. One young woman close to me became quite hysterical, and I ventured to say that she should go out. But she could not move, she was so nervous. The preacher seeing her state, came down to her, and urged her now to relieve her mind, and go at once and make the said public declaration. But she could not move. I very foolishly, as I afterwards found out, suggested that perhaps the poor woman might be as well sitting where she was as anywhere at present. Whew! I was chosen as a subject for a new text at once. He mounted his pulpit and pitched into me as one who had 'intermingled' with his people to their detriment, and in fact made out that I was such a dangerous doctrinarian that I became alarmed and made off just in time to save my coat I suspect."

“What a power these preachers have over uneducated minds!” said the General.

“But I may add that my man, who followed me into the chapel and saw the whole affair, made a worse blunder, though I suspect he did it for mischief. He was asked by the preacher if he had ‘been saved.’ Findlay, an Aberdonian, replied *naïvely*, ‘Man, I didna ken I had been lost!’ He was at once expelled with contumely, and sent out with high words.”

“Ah! Christianity has strange Apostles in these days. It requires all its purity to save it unsullied by the grotesque pictures that are made in imitation of its beauties,” said Forbes. “Whether the character of the divine founder of the faith is less mocked than adored now-a-days is to me a doubt. To what church, General French, will succeeding generations unitedly look

for aid in the service which the duties of Christianity naturally demand of us? Now-a-days there seems nothing but discord on what is the true reading of the Word. There seems little love among bodies of differing Christians. And do these strong sermons, in uncouth sheds and unadorned walls, delivered from the brains of partially educated men, tend to raise the standard of love and reverence in the people? Will this always represent to many men a service to the Gentle Shepherd, or will there be a unity and a union among men, represented by the Episcopal Church of England, with her sweet impressive low voice in words and music, her delicate tracings on her walls and altars; or will the grand old mother of all our Churches be again universally regarded; while she holds aloft the representation of the Perfect

Man ; or will she have ceased to live, fading out before the blank looks of Protestantism ? ”

“ I am, myself, Forbes, and so is my family, of the English Church, liking it best in many ways, and therefore I must admit that I am rather intolerant of these coarse observances that you speak of ; but the Roman Church to me is an over-wrought institution, which I am more and more thankful, the older I get, that the Church of England is separated from so materially.”

“ How vast must be the charity that in the end, and for all eternity, will draw all men towards it in one wide family of love ! Can you believe that all our paltry bickerings about Church, and everything, will end in our gathering together purified in the same Heaven for ever ? If men can hold this faith, how can they enter on these

miserable and exasperating battlings about trifles!" said Forbes.

"Well, I'm for the ladies, theologians. I have strong faith in their goodness. So that any of you who prefer the Church as a subject for after dinner need not follow," said Frazer.

"Well, I dare say we should all follow."

And they did so, and found Miss French and her guests in the full indulgence of tea and coffee, of which they also partook.

Mrs. Edwards, her husband, Captain Vere, and the General, entered with ardour into a rubber of whist, and Miss Vere and Miss French were surrounded by the men from the mountains. And much nice talk, very fast and very satisfactory, as a thing not available for many days, ensued.

"If I could only induce Miss Vere to sing this evening, I should be glad to accompany her on the piano."

"I shall be glad to sing, Miss French. But my singing is a humble attempt."

And Miss Vere sang, with much expression, Longfellow's famous song, "Excelsior," which was new to all the party. And then Miss French played many charming pieces of music, and was prevailed on ultimately to sing a song, which she did with great pathos, and which made Frazer more and more desirous of being regarded as a "pet," and the other two to look on entranced. And Frazer sang "The Cruiskeen Lawn," and the General said it was the best song he ever heard; and MacAndrew sang the "Banks and Braes o' Bonny Doon;" and Captain Vere, R.N., sang the "Bay of Biscay;" and the ladies *encored* it, and he repeated it with the greatest of pleasure. And a pleasant evening was passed; and then the party broke

up by Captain Vere and Miss Vere taking their leave, and the Reverend Mr. Edwards reading prayers to all the household. And thus ended the first day of the visit of our friends to the hospitable house of Balvournie.

CHAPTER VI.

MORNING found Mrs. Edwards the first occupant of the breakfast room—and very earnest she looked there. She had once or twice, on previous visits, observed the marked attention paid by our friend Frazer to her relative, Miss French ; and she loved her far too dearly not to make the prospect of matrimony a question of the liveliest interest to her. If it were possible to induce Miss French to consider the subject reasonably,

it would be such a triumph for her (Mrs. Edwards), and she knew that the General was desirous that his dear child should be made happy with a husband ere the time came when he himself must leave her, in the ordinary course of nature. Miss French, however, could not see that marriage was a state desirable in her circumstances, involving as it inevitably would separation from her father. She argued with Mrs. Edwards that no husband would do well to take up his abode in her father's house, and that she had always understood that such matches proved uncomfortable.

"Our friends look all the better of the sun-burning they have had among the hills," said Mrs. Edwards to Miss French, as she sat by the blazing coal fire of the breakfast-room.

"Yes, I really think so. They are such

an addition to us here when they come, that everything goes much livelier. How very good-looking Mr. Frazer is, and so good-natured and clever !”

“ Yes, my dear, I think he is a most admirable man ; and I can never help referring, in my own mind, to our last conversation on the important subject we then spoke of, when I see you surrounded with so many ardent admirers.”

• “ Nonsense, Aunt Edwards ; you are becoming a perfect match-maker. But I fear you are throwing away your experience upon me. Why not try to get up a match with Mr. Frazer and Miss Vere ; she is such a charming girl, and I think there is a decided flirtation going on already ? ”

“ But, Julia dear, you will give no consideration to the subject as placed so plainly before you by me.”

"Well, no, dear aunt; not at present, at any rate. And here they all come. Good morning, gentlemen. I hope you are none the worse of your long drive yesterday?"

"Good morning, Miss French! I think we are all well; unless it's Frazer, who is unusually low in spirits to-day. I fancy that he misses the peat-reek of our dear Scraggan," said Forbes.

"Low in spirits, Forbes; I never was in better spirits in my life. You very much misrepresent me. And pray, how is it possible to be in low spirits at Balvournie?"

"Perhaps," said Mrs. Edwards, "that his thoughts are on Miss Vere and her song, 'Excelsior.'"

"Well, that would only cause aspirations, not depression," answered Frazer.

"Papa," said Miss French, as the General

entered the room, "here is a charge against us of a serious kind. Mr. Frazer, it seems, has become hypochondriac here already. Quite low spirited !"

"Sorry to hear it, my dear ; I trust you may aid us in endeavouring to put him right again."

"Perhaps half an hour in a turnip-field, looking for partridges may help," said Forbes.

"Yes ; I suppose we may have a day, General, in the low grounds ? What splendid crops of turnips I see from the windows up stairs ! You must have game as abundant here as in England."

"Yes ; I dare say more abundant than in most places in England. The ground is well farmed and well looked after. The tenants have the right of shooting hares and rabbits ; and if I were to propose to clear off

the stock of game, they would be down on me *en masse* to keep it up. They are gentlemanly sportsmen and pleasant men."

So breakfast ended, and the men all went to the gun-room and took out the most pleasant-looking arms adapted for the death of hares and birds; and calling on the keepers and the setters and pointers, they went out to hunt in the fields, as men have done, and always will continue to do, while the race of men and the race of game continue the same in this land, or in any other land. And Mrs. Edwards sighed a good deal when they bade adieu for the forenoon, and Miss French was more joyful than usual, and so was the General; and our three friends thought that it was very pleasant to have the pleasure of such charming society, and they all thought about it in different ways all day in the fields. But

Frazer was evidently altered in his mood, being more fastidious in his ways to his colleagues, and more polite than usual to his old friend the General, whom (although the General did not know it) he felt disposed to go down, in the turnip field, on his knees to, and declare himself for ever miserable if Miss French would not look on him with the eyes of selection from that moment henceforth !

Lots of partridges were killed, the bags stuffed to plenitude, and hares were suspended all round the bodies of several officials, whose duty it was to carry the bags, which were too full to hold the dead. Forbes and MacAndrew did miracles in the way of "both barrels," and the General was steady as usual, not allowing much to pass him. Frazer again was sometimes so hurried in his aim that he fired off without

covering the object; and then again he would allow hares and birds to get away out of range before he took aim! The General was so much surprised at this, on an occasion, that he called out to Frazer that he should be d—d, at which Frazer said, laughing, "All right, General," and fired again, and missed! This made a laugh, and they all thought that Frazer should take a dram; and they all took out their sherry flasks and had a dram, giving whisky to the keepers, which they carried on purpose to make them strong. And so the day passed, and the sun became a large red ball in the west, and set down out of sight among the large sycamores just as the party returned to the house. And as they entered the doorway, Frazer felt that unless he returned to Scraggan the next morning early, he did not know how to get away without being bowed

out by the General, which was not like him either. He felt that he was in a most strange position, and envied the cool unconcern of MacAndrew and Forbes as they whistled away to their rooms to dress for dinner.

“I suppose if I were to say a word to the General on the subject, he would be savage,” sighed he, as he gloomily prepared for his toilet. “I wonder what Forbes would say if I put it in a plain way to him as my friend. But what folly! Whoever heard of a man doing such a generous thing as advising his friend to marry, he himself having no engagement, nor appearance of engagement?”

He did not think of going at once, as all people in any distress should do, to the fountain-head, which in his case was Miss French! “What right have I to speak to

her?" he concluded. "She would say point blank that she wouldn't have me! Well, and then I suppose we could all go back to Scraggan. I suppose that's all that will come of it. What a fool I was to think of saying a word to Forbes, or to MacAndrew, or to any one."

And then the bell went for dinner, and the party all gathered round the well-covered table; the parson declared their general thankfulness in his usual way, and the pleasantries of talk went on for the usual length of time. And the only awkward person was our friend Frazer, who had added to his former discomforts the additional one of blushing frequently; and as this was so unexpected a change in our friend, the General observed it, and while he was carving more beef for MacAndrew, he was looking over the joint at Frazer, who

felt that every long cut the General made in the meat was an incision from the same friendly hand up and down his nose. And there was a new sensation afloat among them all; and Miss French knew in her heart that Frazer had said something to the General (although he had not), and she felt half alarmed, half demure, the merry ring having much subsided from her laugh; and she said "Sir" to Frazer in a cold manner, that made him start like a militiaman when called to attention. And except to Mrs. Edwards the dinner party was rather stiff, but she knew that good would come of it; and when she and Julia retired to the drawing-room she threw her arms round her neck and kissed her, and said she was so glad. But Julia looked solemn, and asked her aunt what she meant, and her aunt told her that everybody knew that Frazer was

head over ears in love with her. But Julia looked more solemn, and declared that every one was a fool."

And the gentlemen took more wine than usual, Frazer particularly. And the parson turned the conversation, by some strange association of circumstances, to the subject of polygamy, as an evil existing in many quarters of the globe; and Forbes gave evidence on the point by referring to Umpanda, the Inkose of the Zulus, who had a larger number of wives than even Solomon in all his glory; that this circumstance was the special hindrance to his—the Inkose—claiming affiliation with the British Government, and the Inkose saw no hope of an amicable settlement of the matter while the Government would not tolerate polygamy. It was the mainstay of his power! And the clergyman having con-

demned Umpana and any other chief who was not a monogamist, turned round on Frazer, and, as he elevated his hair by passing his hand often through it, asked him if he did not agree with him in such condemnation. And Frazer looked long at him without speaking, and then with a smirk that was quite unusual to him, and which gave him the look of a demented lad in good humour, said he supposed so. And the General turned the subject by drinking the clergyman's health, who then left the room, and shortly afterwards Forbes and MacAndrew left the room, and yet Frazer sat, and the General sat out of politeness and good nature, and Frazer then felt that he was alone with him who was then to decide whether he was to marry Miss French or not. So he rose from his chair, and his whole good earnest inner man rose with

him, and he felt that he was about to make a greater exertion than he ever was called on to make before; and the General at the same moment thought, as this great handsome man stood before him, that he never saw a handsomer man, and thought what a comfort and a prop he would be as his son in his old age. And so Frazer told him how he desired to be regarded by Miss French and by him, and the General said that if his daughter regarded him as kindly as he did that it would be well with him. And Frazer spoke of the land he had in Canada, rented by good tenants, and the coffee estates he had in Ceylon—Badbadibodadi alone bringing him in £2000 annually for two years running—and expectations from his uncle Peter, now of Strachan, who was his only relative, and eighty-two years. And they shook hands, and Frazer went up

to his bedroom and washed his face and brushed his hair, and came down gallantly to the drawing-room, and Mrs. Edwards smiled on him, and invited her husband and Mr. Forbes and Mr. MacAndrew to play whist, leaving the General and Miss French out to make the most of Frazer. Having already made so much progress, Frazer did not hesitate to improve his position, and that night while the men were smoking in the gun-room before going to their rooms, Mrs. Edwards knew from Miss French that the matter was settled! Forbes guessed it also from what he termed the "self-satisfied air" of Frazer that night; and the General and the parson shook hands over it cordially next morning.

"A good match, indeed," said Mrs. Edwards to her husband that night. "What a blessing! I suppose they will live in London?"

“ Well, I suppose so ; unless Mr. Frazer is very fond of his present home and rents it alone, with the sanction of his friends, which I am sure may be obtained.”

“ Do you mean Scraggan, dear ? ”

“ Yes, my love.”

“ Rubbish, Edwards ! They’ll take a nice, quiet, comfortable house somewhere about Campden Hill, Kensington, which is certainly more like them.”

“ Well, I hope so, love. We shall see them oftener.”

CHAPTER VII.

THE season was now closing in, when sportsmen in the North lay past the gun and rod, and with the summer's sun, they, like the swallows, veer South again.

The astonishing change in the affairs of our sporting trio had altered their plans entirely. Forbes had a scheme of going to Algoa Bay for the winter, to begin a short journey as far as Bloemfontein, where there were many elands; but of course it was

all knocked in the head by Frazer! MacAndrew had another of going to winter in Norway to look for the Capercailzie, a bird which he had long ardently wished to know. Frazer had, when at Scraggan, almost persuaded the friends to go over with him to Canada, where he had a house in the middle of a most excellent deer country, and where there were also lots of wolves and bears; and he had often charmed them with stories of hunting there with the Indians! and now everything was utterly smashed! Their whole interest for the future seemed damped, in a sporting point of view, by this unexpected rise in Frazer's fortunes.

"We must make arrangements for doing everything ourselves at Scraggan preparatory to leaving," said MacAndrew, with a long face, to his friend Forbes. "Of course

we need not look for Frazer going back with us."

"No; I suppose we need not. That I believe to be too true a fact," said Forbes vacantly. "He will have emptied us overboard in his mind long ago."

"It seems it's an old story! I knew nothing about it," said MacAndrew.

"I always thought he was much struck; and in fact I doubted this very visit, knowing that it would be our last for the season."

"Well, he's a lucky fellow—that's what I say."

"Certainly; and he is a good fellow, and deserves such a charming companion in life. I suppose that they will live with the General here?"

"Yes, in the shooting-season, and go to London in the winter."

“Well, there’s many a worse fate than that! The General always had such a love for him, that I can understand how happy he will be.”

“Here he comes, however, and I suppose we must tell him of our proposal to return at once without him.”

“I dare say he won’t break his heart on that account.”

But the friends were astonished to know that he was not going to stay behind them, and that he was prepared to go to-morrow along with them. His arrangements were that they should all return, and having closed up the Lodge, then repair to London, where in a few days the General and Miss French were to return for the winter. That at Christmas a jolly party was to muster there of all their old acquaintances, and that then the wedding was to take place!”

"Well, old boy, you have been in enormous luck," said MacAndrew. "I never heard of anything like it out of a book!"

"God bless you, Frazer," said Forbes shaking hands, "you know that you will always have my best wishes."

And now the General joined them, and they all walked slowly into the gun-room and had a cheroot. Mr. Edwards sauntered in also, and they were gossiping in easy good humour when the footman entered in a rather hurried manner and handed a note to General French, saying that a man on horseback waited an answer. The General opened the note with a tremulous look, dreading that some bad news was contained in it from the manner of the bearer, and from a general feeling acquired by conversations with the farmers lately that the country in that district was much disturbed

of late by these Church matters. The contents of the note were not calculated to allay these feelings. It ran as follows:—

“THE CASTLE, FAIRTOWN,

“*October 2nd.*

“My dear General,—We are in rather an alarmed state just now from these miserable discontents in Church government. You know that I have used my right of patronage in the appointment of the minister for the Dumbrae church, and I fear that the people will forcibly resist the appointment. Of course the legal authorities will be here to see that all is done in order; but I understand that the military from Inverness have been warned to hold themselves in readiness to march if required to any point of the country. This makes us all very miserable, and I hardly know how to explain that it would be received by Lady

Fairtown and us all as a special favour if you and your whole party would join us till this affair is over. Under the circumstances I am sure that Miss French will excuse this very urgent invitation. With our united kind regard I am my dear General,

Yours truly,

“ROBERT FAIRTOWN.”

General French submitted the note to Frazer, who read it over, and started up with an exclamation of surprise.

“Pray tell us what is the matter,” said Mr. Edwards. “There is surely some disturbance.”

“Read out the letter, Frazer,” suggested the General, and Frazer read it out.

“I suppose gentlemen, I may say that we will go, as it looks to me that Sir Robert Fairtown is in distress; although I believe only imaginary distress.”

"By all means," said the clergyman.
"I'm sure we will all go willingly if our presence can avail for good."

So the General wrote a letter to say that they would be there in the afternoon, and the footman was told that the carriage would be required, with the carriage from Scraggan also, at four o'clock, to go to Fairtown Castle; and there was a silence for some time and then a movement of decision, preparatory to going.

"We should be thankful that we do not belong to the lower classes," said Frazer to the Rev. Mr. Edwards savagely.

"I am thankful every day, my dear Sir, that it has pleased providence to place me in my present sphere of usefulness," returned the clergyman.

"I dare say, Frazer," said Forbes, "that every one of these people considers himself

as independent as you are; and although they are at present in this rabid state, they are generally very respectable people."

"But why do they use violence against the laws of the land?" asked the clergyman.

"I dare say they are influenced by the preachers who have left the Church a good deal; whose business and pleasure it is to excite the people, and then they do not consider that State law in Church matters is recognizable — wishing only that church functionaries of their own should regulate their affairs."

"But the law is made, and they should obey it; else how can order maintain?" urged the clergyman.

"Yes, it is to Parliament they should speak, and there lies the error of their present conduct," said Forbes.

Mrs. Edwards and Miss French were alarmed at the proposal to go to the castle, but were reassured when they knew that *all* the gentlemen were to go. The General gave instructions to the servants who remained, to act with the utmost civility to any person coming to the house in his absence ; but as he had no concern in this affair, no danger was apprehended by the servants. And the large well-appointed carriage, with tall horses and comfortable-looking coachman and footman, came to the door, and was filled by the elder portion of the party and the ladies ; and the three men of the mountains drove in the Scraggan phaeton with Hamish driving, and were a laughable contrast to the other part of the cavalcade. They all reached the castle at the hour appointed.

Sir Robert Fairtown was popularly re-

garded by the people as being a generous and good landlord. His charities, and the affectionate regard always shown by Lady Fairtown to the poor, made the family much esteemed. He was always prepared to help any person who approached him, asking help, and many young men from the estate had gone abroad fitted out with money and credentials by Sir Robert's bounty.

That so suddenly a popular feeling against Sir Robert should be raised was a wonderful occurrence ; and he himself, while resolute in maintaining his right in this church presentation, felt bitterly the sting of the ingratitude of the people. The Presbytery of the Established Church were to induct the minister at Dumbrae, on the following day, and various threatening letters had been received by Sir Robert on the subject, as well as letters imploring him affection-

ately not to proceed in the face of the people, with this duty. Violent letters were also addressed by unknown writers to the members of the Presbytery, declaring that if they ventured near the church to proceed with the ceremony, they would be attacked and their work forcibly stopped. Under all these circumstances and after consulting his friends, Sir Robert was impelled to intimate the facts to the legal authorities and to demand protection ; and his request had been respected and complied with in so far that a constable and his assistant were despatched to represent law and to maintain order.

The common people, that is the people holding small crofts or farms, and the labourers generally made up the class of dissenters, and it was to the will of these people that Sir Robert and the Government of the

land were now called upon to depute right and justice in the matter of the selection and appointment of the ministers of the Gospel !

“ I hope, Sir Robert, that your fears may be exaggerated, and that the disturbance may go past, and things come all settled again. The people are generally peaceable and orderly, and your own good name I am sure is sufficient guarantee that no violence will be offered to your presentee,” said General French.

“ No, General; if men are not impelled by moral suasion to regard the recognized law of the land, you may rest assured that only the power of the law will compel them to respect it in this matter. These people, through their ministers, say that we are monopolizing a right that should be theirs, as from God. They will recognize no law

in Church matters which does not emanate from themselves, and the State is looked upon as a usurper."

"But surely, Sir Robert, no violence will be attempted on your person? If you think so, I would recommend that you simply avoid the induction altogether."

"But I must do my duty, General, and my duty impels me to accompany the Presbytery to the church, and there see the ceremony duly performed as if there were no opposition in the minds of the people at all, and this I purpose doing."

"Good, Sir Robert. I myself and my friends will go with you, and we will at least have the distinction of sharing your discomfiture or your triumph."

"Well, this is not what I want, General. If you will all remain with Lady Fairtown in the castle, I shall be vastly better pleased.

You have no interest in this matter, and the people might think it a covering or protecting party, which I do not wish them to do. I shall return to you and report progress after the event is passed. It is a short distance to the church from the castle."

Thus matters stood when on the morrow, after the morning prayers in the castle by the Rev. Mr. Edwards, a deputation was announced to Sir Robert from the people of the parish.

"Will you see them, Sir Robert?" said the General. "You may perhaps make an impression on them by saying that you have a strong force at hand to see the law carried out."

"I shall certainly see them, at any rate, General."

"If you ducked them in the horse trough one by one I think it would be the wiser

policy, Sir Robert," said Frazer, rising in wrath.

"I should give them very little comfort, at any rate," said MacAndrew.

"I fear that abusing the delegates would be bad policy," said Forbes.

"Pray, Sir Robert, do not show any temper," urged Lady Fairtown.

And Sir Robert went out to the Hall to see and speak to his tenants.

"I always understood that the people of Scotland were a quiet inoffensive people, not given to violence," said Mrs. Edwards.

"Well, my love, you see that you and I are mistaken, judging from present appearances. If they are not rude people, they have occasionally some roughness in their ways, and a roughness which stops not at defiance of law."

"I think," said Forbes, "that our Go-

vernment have made a mistake in not ceding to the people what they demand in this matter. They are not the people to stop now, having gone so far ; and we will see empty churches and empty manses, which otherwise might have been as full or fuller than before ; and there will be bitterness and heart-burnings in the land for a century. The privilege of presentation is not worth a hundredth part of the cost."

Here Sir Robert returned, having met his deputation, and having boldly and plainly informed them that until the law of the land abrogated his right to patronage, he would maintain it. That he would be at the church in an hour's time to see the induction of his presentee, Mr. Sowansup, and that he had authorized the adoption of precautionary measures to prevent disturbance. The men of the deputation were

equally plain, and intimated to Sir Robert that his conduct in this matter was unlike his usual liberality, and begged that he would not go personally or permit any of his family to approach the parish church. They would guarantee that if Sir Robert would stay at home this day no violence would occur, but that the people were determined to prevent the induction taking place. Nothing having been ceded on either side, the deputation left the castle.

“And I expect the presentee, Mr. Sowansup, here immediately, and he and I will walk down together and meet the Presbytery. If he does not come soon, I shall go alone.”

“Now, Sir Robert, I wish you would allow me to insist on your staying in the castle,” urged Lady Fairtown. “For my own part I am sorry that you take so much

interest in this matter, and would prefer much that you would permit this day at least to pass over without your taking any active part."

To which her lord objected.

"I suppose, Sir Robert, we may all accompany you at any rate," said Frazer. "We may help in some way or other to prevent disorder?"

"I would rather not; but here comes a carriage, which must contain some one of importance." And now were announced the names of the Sheriff of the County and the Procurator Fiscal of the County—the two most important Scotch legal functionaries. They were both well known at the castle, and introduction was barely needed.

"We have come, Sir Robert, under the impression that this matter is one of great importance, and we fully expect that the

law will be openly defied," said the Sheriff. "This is the first case in this district, where a presentee will be forcibly resisted, as we fear he will be. But we have reason to believe that others will follow, and if it were possible we would act vigorously now, that further evil may be prevented. You shall decide for yourself of course, Sir Robert, whether or no you should approach this scene ; but I think that your influence for good may be great. The only person to be specially protected we think in person is the presentee. He and the Presbytery are to arrive at the church together, and as the hour named is now about up, we will proceed thither that we may arrive there simultaneously. Our constables are there now, we apprehend."

"Yes, gentlemen, I shall accompany you," said Sir Robert, "and am ready."

"Stay, gentlemen," said Lady Fairtown, "if my husband goes I go. I dare say my influence may do good also," and away her ladyship flew for her cloak.

"I think it would be much better Sir Robert, that we all go; we are all known as having only a kindly interest in the people," said the General; and so no objection having been offered, they all went and mustered in the avenue to walk down to the church. In all, the party consisted of eleven persons, ladies and gentlemen, making a respectable show even in number. The carriage of the Sheriff and the Procurator Fiscal followed the party leisurely. The road led entirely through large forest-trees and evergreens, and the church was not visible until close upon it. Our friends stood for a moment amazed on emerging from the woods of the castle and looking in

the direction of the church. There they saw an immense crowd of people, numbering hundreds, men and women, old and young. A cry of dissatisfaction rose from the multitude as they saw the party emerge, and the mass moved suddenly nearer the church, the bell of which suddenly began to toll violently.

"Sir Robert, that looks like riot; allow me to persuade you to return," said General French.

"Ladies and gentlemen," said the Sheriff turning towards them, "I fear that you do wrong to advance, and I must beg you to return to the castle; there will evidently be violence here. Pray return!"

"No," said Sir Robert, "I am on my own property with my friends, bent on a duty which I owe to the authority of the country, and nothing shall deter me from

going to the church to induct Mr. Sowansup."

And then a loud howl and a more violent ringing of the church bell told that the carriage conveying the Presbytery and the presentee was now in sight. And here the constables came up and addressed the Sheriff and the Fiscal privately, and the Sheriff beckoned to his coachman to advance, and with a polite bow to Sir Robert and the party, he and the Fiscal and the two constables jumped briskly into the carriage.

"Sir Robert, and ladies and gentlemen," said the Sheriff, "I beg that you will proceed no further, but return at once; it is more serious than I dreaded even, and considering the probable danger, I will not offer you, Sir Robert, a seat in our conveyance, but we will return as soon as possible to the castle," and away drove the carriage.

It was evident that the object of the dissentients was to prevent the authorities getting near the church. The road from the castle, and that by which the Presbytery must advance, conjoined a short way in front of the church, and the two carriages met at the junction. A consultation was held by the gentlemen of the law and the Presbytery, and they resolved that an attempt should be made at once to enter the church. By this time the party from the castle had advanced with Sir Robert, or rather as a protection to him, as he would persist in advancing, and by the time that the conference had ended they joined the Sheriff's party, and advanced along with them towards the gate of the church, the constables leading. There was deep silence; and as the day was gloomy and dark, it seemed to give its impress to the countenances of the people,

who stood waiting the approach of their opponents. The Sheriff had prepared himself with a copy of the Riot Act, and took the paper from his pocket in preparation. They were then within about a hundred yards of the gate, and this action of the Sheriff being construed no doubt into a menace, a loud howl of defiance, with mingled shrill cries from women, rent the stillness. The advancing party instinctively stood still, when instantaneously a volley of stones assailed them, and a number of reaping-hooks and sticks were threateningly raised aloft.

“Advance,” roared Sir Robert; “officers of the law do your duty;” but he had barely spoken the words when a large stone struck him on the head, and he swooned. The command of the castle party having thus as it were devolved upon the General, as

senior, he at once took the responsibility of wheeling it about, seizing Lady Fairtown and ordering them all to make for home without delay. The servants of the castle had now followed their master, and rushed up to protect the wounded baronet.

Frazer and the others all saw the folly of exposing the ladies to danger now that violence had really been declared, and to protect them they turned round and walked away. But this movement attracted the attention at once of the dissentients, and a detachment of them came down upon them with hoots and yelling.

"Frazer, use no violence, remember," cried the General, as he saw the torrent making for them.

He was answered by a look that spoke of fire kindling behind that Celtic eye, and he thought in this moment of peril that

God had blest him in sending him such a son.

Here Lady Fairtown spoke out aloud, asking the ladies, Mrs. Edwards and Miss French, to have no alarm. She had known the people who were advancing to them for years, and was sure that they would do no violence. Part of this sentence was heard by the advancing column, and a voice cried out, "And wha wanted to do you harm but yoursells. What brought you here wi' your constables and your shirras. Were na ye no warned timeously?"

"Elsbeth, you here," said Lady Fairtown to an old woman she had been tending in sickness a day or two before. "How dare you come on such an errand! I did not know you had strength to walk."

"Ah, my lady, the Lord gied me strength this day, an' that's how I am here."

Here the Reverend Mr. Edwards thought that surely the voice of a clergyman would be listened to in such a case, and although Forbes endeavoured to dissuade him, he stood still and lifted up his hand as indicating that he wished to speak.

"Haud your tongue, you fushenless creature," called out a voice.

"What hae ye to say, you poor croudy-faced Erastian? You wad mingle your words wi' ours, wad ye; but yours is fulsome leaven that winna leaven; as free o' grace as ye are yoursell o' the Lord's blessing."

"Were it no' that you are in good company this day, wi' my lady there, I wad warm your haffets for you, my man, for your interfering," said a virago.

"Down wi' the Erastian," cried a woman's voice, and suddenly a rush of many

people was made to get at the clergyman, who undismayed cried,

“My friends, allow me to speak.”

But he was not allowed to speak; and although the gentlemen fought hard to save him, he was dragged to the earth and trodden upon, his clothes torn to shreds and his body sorely bruised. The ladies cried and shrieked; but hands were raised against them, and Lady Fairtown received a severe blow on the arm, endeavouring to shelter Mrs. Edwards.

The gentlemen struck out with a will when they saw that their arms were now required for protection; and Frazer knocking down a man who advanced to them, seized his stick and cleared a passage for the rest of the party. By blows and words they managed to effect a separation from the assailants, who were now becoming

more interested in the ministers' party at the church gate, and gradually they reached the avenue and got to the castle. Then it was that the truth came to their knowledge, that Sir Robert and Mr. Edwards were both missing ; and it was only by the most earnest entreaty that the wives could be dissuaded from returning to seek their husbands.

"They will certainly come home," urged the General ; "and what influence have we with such a multitude ! You must remain in the castle, and I must insist on it."

Grief and horror filled their hearts, and they retired to their rooms to pray.

The Sheriff and the Presbytery did not attain their object ; and after several attempts, in which they were all severely wounded, they had to retire defeated. They had hurriedly to drive off ; but they were

assailed with showers of stones and execrations along the road.

But at the castle night came, and no sign of Sir Robert or the Reverend Mr. Edwards! Frazer and MacAndrew determined to make a reconnoitre; and getting the coachman as guide they went out in the moonlight. From what could be ascertained, Sir Robert had recovered after his first wound, when again he was threatened, and he was then seen to move away in the direction of the castle; so that the servants who first saved him thought that he had gone home. Not, however, till next day was Mr. Edwards traced to a cottage, where he had been secreted by a woman more humane than the excited crowd; and although much bruised was able to return with his friends. Then a note reached the castle by a lad, which had been deli-

vered to him by Sir Robert. It intimated that having gained the house of an influential farmer in the vicinity of the scene, he had borrowed his conveyance and gone to a Lodge several miles away, where he would remain for some time. He was, he said, not much hurt, and hoped that his friends would justify him in his apparent flight from them. He thought it best to avoid the castle, as he believed that his being there would bring the enemy—as he termed the people—about it. He had not evidently heard of the distress of his friends.

This information brought comparative peace at the castle. Lady Fairtown, however, was yet confined to her bedroom.

And then the General gathered his forces and returned to Balvournie. There the men of Scraggan made arrangements to

return to their hills. They had proposed joining the General at the Great Northern Meeting, at Inverness; but this miserable Church riot had made them all too serious for the time to think of festivity. Farewell was said, and when they all met again it was in London as arranged.

The happy event which deprived the Scraggan party of its chief motive power added a much greater power to General French's establishment. The marriage of Frazer and Miss French took place at Christmas, and the ceremony was performed by the Rev. Mr. Edwards according to the Episcopal Church service. Mr. Edwards never returned to Scotland, although all the others did—even Mrs. Edwards. Had he returned, he would have seen that out of the wild riot—a part of which only he witnessed, and which was only one among

many of much more violence—the Free Church of Scotland had risen to be a church of great importance in the land, comprehending in its congregations many of the most distinguished men of business and of agriculture. He would, however, also have observed that this great breaking up of the Church of Scotland caused divisions in families and shattered friendships which took years to cement.

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